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THE

# CATECHISM OF RODEZ

*EXPLAINED IN FORM OF SERMONS*

A WORK EQUALLY USEFUL TO THE

Clergy, Religious Communities, and Faithful

BY THE

## ABBÉ LUCHE

*Now this is eternal life: That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*—John xvii. 3.

*TRANSLATED*

AND ADAPTED TO THE WANTS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC BY

REV. JOHN THEIN

Priest of the Diocese of Cleveland. Author of "Christian Anthropology," "Answer to Difficulties of the Bible," etc., etc.

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REV. JOHN THEIN

# RECOMMENDATION

## Of Rt. Rev. Ign. F. Horstmann, D. D., Bishop of Cleveland.

THIS volume of Instructions is a translation of Abbe Luche's "Catechism of Rodez in the Form of Sermons," which, from its first appearance some forty years ago, has remained a standard work for French Catholics.* We are sure that it will find a welcome in its English dress, at the hands of our Clergy. The Instructions go over the whole of Christian Doctrine. What our people need is less of sermons, but far more of instruction. Unless they know their holy faith, its doctrines, its Sacraments, its practices of piety, and all that constitutes real Catholicity, they cannot love it; if they do not love it, they will not practice it; if they do not practice it, they will not make sacrifices for it; and sacrifice is the very soul of religion. "Overcome thyself," is the foundation of morality, and all morality must be grounded on the truths of faith. Any one who has had experience in preaching and the direction of souls must have learned that the faithful long for such practical instructions.

Father Thein has done good service in translating this excellent work of Abbe Luche, and we hope that his enterprise will receive the encouragement it merits, not only from the Clergy, but also from the laity.

+ Ign. F. Horstmann
Bp of Cleveland

* Abbé Luche's work passed through fourteen editions.
THE TRANSLATOR.

## APPROBATION OF THE BISHOP OF RODEZ

WE, Louis-August, by the divine mercy and the grace of the Apostolic See, bishop of Rodez, on the report of our Committee for the examination of books, have approved, and do now approve by these presents, a manuscript entitled: "Catechism of Rodez," in so far as it contains nothing that is not conformable to the teachings of the Church, assured that the publication thereof will be useful to the faithful of both city and country through its clear, methodical, and well-considered exposition of the dogmatical and moral truths of religion.

\+ LOUIS,

*Bishop of Rodez*

# AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN THE abridged explanation of the Christian Doctrine which, at the repeated instances of my fellow-priests, I have decided to give to the public, I have followed the plan of the "Catechism of Rodez," without rigorously confining myself to its text.

When I undertook this long and difficult work, I had not the pretension of offering something new, at least not in the main.

The object has been to sum up the points of doctrine and to condense them in such a manner that the preacher may go over them all, in the pulpit, within the space of four years at most, as the spiritual well-being of his congregation may require; to avail myself of the assistance of the most accredited Catechists, such as Noel, Cambournac, Guillois, Couturier, Guillet, Canisius, Bressenvido, Reinerie, etc., and to support myself on the contemporary theology of Gousset and Gury; to set forth the truths and to give the practical details with simplicity, clearness, and method, in order to put them within the compass of the most ordinary intelligences; finally to dispose the form of my instructions in such a manner that, by the unity of the subject, the connection of the ideas, and an uniformity of style, they may serve as well for sermons as for catechetical instructions.

Such has been my programme and my end. I shall be happy, indeed, if I have succeeded in fulfilling the former and attaining the latter. My readers shall judge, and the future shall tell me.

What inspires me with a little confidence, is the favorable judgment of the "Committee on Books" which took such great care in examining my manuscript, and, especially, the high approbation of Monseigneur Delalle, our well-beloved prelate, who, by his learning and accomplishments, occupies a distinguished rank in the French episcopate.

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# FIRST PART

## ON FAITH AND THE CREED

### I. INSTRUCTION

#### On Faith and the Creed in General

The Catechism is an abridged explanation, by questions and answers, of the truths which religion teaches, and of the duties which it prescribes.

Of all the knowledge which it is important for man to acquire upon earth, there is none more necessary than a knowledge of the Catechism, because this alone can lead us to salvation. Hence arises the obligation for all the faithful to learn it and to try to understand its meaning, to attend diligently the instructions which may be given on its subject-matter, and to listen to them with attention and respect.

The Catechism is divided into four parts: —

1st. Faith and the Creed; 2d. Hope and Prayer; 3d. Charity and the Commandments; 4th. Grace and the Sacraments. In the first instruction we shall speak of Faith and the Creed in general.

Who has created us and placed us in this world? Such is the first question which we find in the Catechism, and one which a Christian should often put to himself. Indeed, it is most important to know what we are, whence we come, why we exist, and what shall become of us.

Our reason unaided cannot answer any of these capital questions. This is clearly proved by the monstrous errors of paganism, and even of the ancient philosophers, who never had any exact idea of the dignity of man, or of our future state. Christian faith, or revelation, alone can enlighten us on all these subjects.

Guided by the supernatural light of faith, we shall instruct you later on with regard to the existence of God and His adorable perfections, as also with regard to our nature, our origin, and our destiny.

We shall tell you how man, drawn out of nothing by the Creator, was placed upon earth only to know his author, to love and serve Him here according to his strength, and, finally, to merit by virtue and good works to possess and glorify Him forever in Heaven.

But before entering into such important explanations, which embrace almost the entire Christian doctrine, it is necessary for us to be well instructed on the source of all these truths, and to see how faith is a beacon-light destined to guide us in the midst of the dense darkness with which our intelligence is surrounded, as formerly the fiery column preceded the people of God in their march from Egypt, and directed their steps through the desert.

The nature of faith, its excellence, its necessity, its qualities, and where the truths of faith are to be found — these, my brethren, are the several points which we are to examine to-day.

I. What is faith? Faith is a gift of God, by which we believe, with a perfect submission, all that God has revealed to His Church.

We say, first, that faith is a *gift*, because it is something gratuitous, which we could not merit by any good work; and I add that it is a *gift of God*, because it can come only from God. It is a grace, and the first of all graces, according to the language of the apostle St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians: *For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God* (Ephes. II. 8); or again, according to the words of the apostle St. James: *Every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above* (James I. 17). When, therefore, we are so happy as to possess the gift of faith, it is to God that we should be thankful: *Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift* (2 Cor. IX. 15). And if, unfortunately, we do not possess it, we have to ask Him for it, according to the example of St. Peter, when he said: *I do believe, Lord; help my unbelief* (Mark IX. 23), and that of all the Apostles together, when they cried out: *Lord, increase our faith* (Luke XVII. 5). Finally, we say that faith is a gift of God by which we believe with a *perfect submission*, to show you that faith is not a human science, a conviction based upon simple reason, but an humble and perfect submission, a full and entire adherence to the truths of revelation, even to those which seem to us the most incomprehensible, because these truths having been taught us by God Himself and by His Church, we need have no fear of being deceived.

II. Is faith necessary for salvation? Yes, undoubtedly, for how could God reward in heaven those who refused to believe in Him in this life? Faith is the first of the three theological virtues, that is, of the three virtues that have God for their immediate object, viz.: Faith, Hope, and Charity. It is from faith that the other virtues have their source and without faith no other virtue is possible. In fact, how could we love God and hope in Him, if we did not believe in His existence and in the truths which He has deigned to reveal to us? Therefore, much as hope and charity are indispensable to the gaining of heaven, much more is it necessary to have faith, which is the *foundation and the root of all justification*, according to the Council of Trent. Hence the words of St. Paul that *without faith it is impossible to please God* (Heb. IX. 6), and that oracle of our Lord: *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned* (Mark XVI. 16).

Faith, my brethren, is not only the principle of hope and charity, but is also the source of all the other Christian virtues, such as humility, patience, and chastity, which without faith would be unknown upon earth. It is faith which germinates them in the souls of the faithful, and which nourishes, develops, and preserves them. The more lively faith is, the more ardent are the other virtues, and the more zeal and generosity we show in offering to God all the sacrifices He requires of us. With faith, we triumph over the most violent passions and the most terrible temptations; we keep away from the most alluring occasions of sin, and surmount the greatest obstacles. Without faith, we flinch before the least privation and the least inconvenience; we fulfill no duty with a courageous and constant fidelity; we live in sinful indifference.

III. But what are the qualities of faith? They are five in number. It should be enlightened, active, firm, simple, and universal.

1st. Faith must be Enlightened.—Our faith is enlightened when we are instructed in the truths it teaches and in the duties it prescribes. In fact, we cannot believe, at least in an explicit manner, truths of which we are ignorant, nor can we practice duties of which we know nothing. Thus everyone is obliged, under pain of damnation, to know, at least in substance, the three mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption. Every one must know and believe that the soul is immortal, and that after this life there is another, happy or unhappy, according as one's

life here has been good or bad. Everyone should be instructed in the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Commandments of God and of the Church, and in the Sacraments, and if any one through his own fault is ignorant of those subjects he is guilty of mortal sin.

It is not sufficient to know the letter of the words contained in the Catechism. One must know also their meaning. He who would not make any effort to understand them, would sin more or less grievously, according as the ignorance is more or less great, and according as the points of dogma and morals of which he is ignorant are more or less important. Therefore, how great is the guilt of those persons who do not assist at the instructions of the parish, or who pay no attention to them! What a serious responsibility for parents who neglect to have their children instructed!

2d. FAITH MUST BE ACTIVE.—That is, we must practice the duties which faith prescribes to us; without this, we would be Christians in name only, and pagans or atheists in conduct. This is what the apostle St. James teaches us when he says that faith without good works amounts to nothing. Thus, for example, when you believe in God, you must respect His presence, and not blaspheme His holy and adorable name. When you believe in a happy or unhappy eternity, you must labor to avoid the one and merit the other. If you were to remain in indifference, what good would your belief do you? *Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself* (James II. 17). When you believe in the Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, you must submit to its authority and observe its precepts. Faith is an *excellent* gift, but it would serve only for your destruction and damnation if you did not fulfill its obligations: *To him who knoweth to do good and doth it not, to him it is sin* (James IV. 17). A fearful truth, my brethren, and well worthy of our most serious meditation.

3d. FAITH MUST BE FIRM and immovable as the motives upon which it is founded. Upon what motives is our faith based? On the word of God and of His Church. Now, my brethren, is God not the truth, the very essence of truth; and is not the Church, His holy spouse, infallible in all her teachings? Our faith, therefore, cannot be subject to any error, and we should believe all that faith teaches us with a firmness that excludes all suspicion of hesitation or doubt. We should believe all its truths as if we saw them with our own eyes, and even more firmly, for the senses might deceive us sometimes, but

our faith founded on the word of God can never deceive us. Our faith should have the firmness of the immovable rock upon which the storms and tempests beat in vain, and it should resist all the attacks and temptations of the devil, as well as all the sophisms of infidelity.

4th. Our Faith must be Simple.—There must be none of those vain inquiries, or of those curious examinations which serve only to diminish faith, instead of strengthening it. God has spoken, the Church has defined, and that should be sufficient for us. It matters not that in our faith there are mysteries above our intelligence. When we cannot well understand natural things which we have daily before our eyes, how can we expect to understand the most profound truths in the treasury of the divine science and wisdom? It is written that *He who is a searcher of God's majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory* (Prov. xxv. 27). Undoubtedly, it wounds pride and self-love not to be able to understand all; but, my brethren, this is a sacrifice which God has a right to require from us, and for which we will be well rewarded by that tranquillity of soul and by those sweet consolations which simple faith procures for us. Are there any greater rewards upon earth? *The just man lives by faith*, says the apostle St. Paul (Rom. i. 17). Where are the evils that faith cannot sweeten? "O heavenly faith," cries out Chateaubriand, "thou doest more than the moving of mountains; thou removest the pressing burdens that weigh upon the heart."

5th. Our Faith must be Universal.—It must extend to all the truths which the Church teaches, without excepting a single one. The truths of faith are like the links of a chain, which are so connected with one another that one link cannot be removed without breaking the whole chain. Moreover, all the truths of faith having God for their author, and being consequently based on the same authority, what motive could we have to believe one rather than another? And would not that be making of God a God of truth and a God of falsehood, at one and the same time?

IV. Where do we find the truths we should believe? We find them in Holy Scripture and in Tradition accepted and consecrated by the Church.

By *Scripture* we understand the writings made under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and left to God's Church for our instruction. The book which contains these writings is called the *Bible*, a word

which signifies a book *par excellence*. The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old and the New Testament. The first contains the books written before Christ, that is, the books of Moses, the Prophets, etc.; and the second, those which were written after Christ, such as the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles.

But all the truths of faith are not contained in the Bible. There are some that were handed down to us unwritten from the Apostles, who received them from Jesus Christ. This we call *Tradition*. It is found to-day in the works of the Fathers and in the decrees of the Councils. But as there are few of the faithful who would be able to remember, or to examine, all the truths scattered in so many works, the Church has collected them all in one single body of doctrine, and has made a very concise abridgment of them in the Creed, and it is this Creed which she puts in our hands, and which she proposes to our belief.

There are four Creeds or Symbols: the Apostles' Creed, which we recite every day in our prayers; the Nicene Creed, which is sung at Mass, and which is only a development of the first; the Creed of the Council of Constantinople, which merely added some words to that of Nice; and finally the Creed of St. Athanasius, which expresses in detail the doctrine of the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Word. But in essence these four Creeds, or Symbols, form only one; because they all contain one and the same doctrine.

The Apostles' Creed, which is the first and the origin of all the others, was drawn up by the Apostles themselves, before their separation, and is composed of twelve articles or dogmas. *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth* — the first article; *and in Jesus Christ His only Son* — the second article, and so forth.

These twelve articles are divided into four parts: The first part teaches what we must believe of the person of the Father, and of the work of creation; the second part, of the person of the Son, and of the work of the Incarnation; the third, of the person of the Holy Ghost, and of the work of sanctification; the fourth, of the Church, and of the work of glorification. We shall explain this Creed — article after article — in the following instructions.

V. After having shown you the qualities which faith must have, I will add that it is not enough to possess the faith buried in our

heart, but that it is necessary often to make acts of faith. Faith is the nourishment of the soul, and our soul has need of this spiritual food, as our body has need of material food. There are circumstances in which we are even bound under pain of sin to make acts of faith. Thus, one is bound to this: 1st. When we have attained the age of reason; 2d. When we are tried by temptations against faith; 3d When we approach the Sacraments; 4th. When we are in danger of death. But a true Christian does not content himself with making acts of faith in these circumstances only; he renews them often in his life. He makes them daily, and even several times a day; for the more frequent these acts, the more lively our faith becomes, and the more regular and fervent is our conduct.

We must make acts of faith in and from the heart, but we must also make them exteriorly by word of mouth. The exterior profession of faith is sometimes a duty. It is a duty, says St. Thomas, every time the glory of God, or the salvation of our neighbor, demands it. For example, if a judge ask you about your religion, you cannot, without apostasy, deny that you are a Christian. If you find yourselves among persons who mock at religion and at its ministers, who ridicule confession, prayer, and the most sacred things, you are obliged to answer them — at least when it is not evident that your correction will produce no good effect. Be careful in these circumstances, my brethren, not to allow yourselves to be overcome by human respect. You know that our Divine Master says that *if we are ashamed of Him before men, He will be ashamed of us before His Father.* On such occasions you must show that you are Christians, and that you glory in being such. And, after all, what does it matter if you displease men, provided you please God? Will men judge you at death, or will it be God?

Now, is this faith, such as I have explained to you, solidly established in your mind and heart? Did you never entertain doubts about some of the truths which it teaches? Did you never carry on or listen to impious and blasphemous discourses against faith? Did you never omit your duties on account of some miserable human respect?

Ah! my brethren, how often, undoubtedly, have we not sinned against this great and fundamental virtue! Now, then, if we acknowledge ourselves guilty, let us very humbly beg pardon of God, and let us resolve to be more careful and more prompt in repelling the

temptations which may assail us against faith; more firm in defending it against those who may attack it in our presence; more generous in conforming our conduct to our belief; and it is thus that we shall merit eternal happiness. Amen.

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## II. INSTRUCTION

### First Article of the Creed: On God

*I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth*

I. The existence of God, my brethren, is the first truth which the Creed teaches: *I believe in a God.* It is, therefore, an article of faith, and even a fundamental article, that there is a God, because the whole fabric of Christian doctrine rests upon this basis. Besides it is not only faith that teaches us this great truth, but reason itself. The necessity of a first being who is the creator of all things and of the beautiful order that reigns in the universe is apparent, and the belief of all the nations cannot leave any doubt in this regard.

1st. The necessity of a first being. This world has not always existed, for it is contrary to reason that any matter should be eternal, and in considering all the animated beings which fill the universe, we must always go back to a first being, the principle of all others which descend from it, and which is as the first link of a long chain. There has been, therefore, a time when the beautiful firmament, the immense seas, the earth which we tread, the men and the animals that live on it, the plants that cover and embellish it, did not yet exist. Now, who could draw forth from nothing all these things — so many beings whose beauty enraptures us, whose infinite variety confounds our imagination, who but a God of infinite power?

2d. Moreover, let us admire the beautiful order which reigns in the universe, and see how everything is regulated, even to the smallest details. Behold the sun, the moon, and the millions of stars, pursuing their course in space, without ever deviating from the route that has been traced out for them. Ravished by admiration, the

prophet cries out: *The heavens show forth the glory of God!* (Ps. XVIII. 1.) Consider the unchangeable order of the seasons and the uninterrupted succession of days and nights, marking out for man the times for labor and for rest. The earth is placed at a proper distance from the sun in order to be lighted and heated by its fires without being consumed. Consider the numberless multitudes of plants and trees and animals which form the ornament and life of the earth. What grandeur, and what marvel! The plants, as if under the influence of a mystic force, grow and develop; they renew and perpetuate themselves, each according to its own species; they draw from the earth the sap that nourishes them, and which circulates through them by thousands of different channels, and soon we see the leaves, blossoms, and fruits.

The animals charm and astonish us by their wonderful structure, by the diversity of their forms and colors, by the services which they render to man for his wants or for his pleasures. The smallest, those that escape our notice, have the organs necessary to life just as we have, and all are endowed with a wonderful instinct of self-preservation. Who has taught them the nourishment their nature requires, to prepare for their young ones a sure and agreeable shelter, to dwell in a suitable climate or to pass into a region either warmer or colder, according to the seasons of the year?

Oh! how much could I not tell you especially of man, the king and master-work of creation! What beauty, what symmetry, what perfection in the economy of the human body! "I will give you a hundred years," said Galen to the followers of Epicurus, "to try to find the least defect in the human body." And in the soul of man, how can we help admiring that memory which so faithfully retains the impressions of the past; that intelligence which comprehends truth, discovers error, and explains the universe; that imagination, so lively and fruitful, which creates so many prodigies!

Can any one, after this, refuse to acknowledge the hand of God in this wonderful world which unfolds itself before our eyes? "Oh, no," said Voltaire, "I shall always be persuaded that a clock bespeaks a clock-maker, and that the universe bespeaks a God."

3d. Moreover, my brethren, we find that all the nations of the earth, both ancient and modern, have always acknowledged the existence of God, because everywhere and at all times have been found temples, altars, and sacrifices. Undoubtedly, they were deceived as to

the nature and attributes of God; but it is none the less true that always and everywhere men have adored a deity. Now, is not a belief so unanimous, and a faith so constant and universal, an unanswerable proof of this fundamental truth? And must we not consider a person bereft of all reason who would refuse to believe in the existence of God? I will not dwell any longer on this point for fear of offending your good sense. If I have insisted on these truths and arguments, it was only with a view to enlighten your faith.

II. But what is God? What is His nature? What are His perfections? These are questions that will be difficult to answer and to make sufficiently clear. Let me put the answer thus:—God is an eternal spirit, all-powerful, unchangeable, immense, who beholds all, who hears all, who provides for all; in a word, a spirit infinite in all sorts of perfections.

1st. God is called a *spirit*, that is, an intelligence, which cannot be seen by our eyes, or be touched by our hands, or be perceived by any of our senses, just as our souls and the angels. It is true that God is sometimes represented under sensible forms; God the Father, under the figure of an aged man; God the Son, under the form of a man dead on the cross; God the Holy Ghost, under the form of a dove, but this is done only the better to fix our imagination. The Father is represented under the figure of an old man, to show us that he is eternal; the Son, as dying upon a cross, to recall to our minds the mystery of Redemption; the Holy Ghost, under the figure of a dove, because it was under that form that He appeared formerly upon earth. And when sometimes the Scriptures speak of the eyes of God, of His ears, His arms, and His hands, it is only to make us understand that God sees all things, hears all things, that His power is infinite, and that His wrath is terrible.

2d. God is *eternal*. He never had any beginning, and will never have an end. When thinking of the eternity of God, you imagine perhaps that He has existed for thousands and millions of years. This is true, but it is not thus that we must understand the eternity of God. For Him there are neither days nor years. Periods of time are only for us who grow old and pass away. God has always been and will always be the same: *Yesterday, and to-day, and the same forever* (Heb. XIII. 8). Picture to yourself thousands of millions of centuries before the creation of the world, and God existed before all this time, and infinitely beyond that. Imagine, again,

thousands of millions of centuries after this world shall have been destroyed; God will still exist after all these centuries, and forever. *I live forever*, says the Lord (Deut. xxxii. 40). If you ask me where God was before the beginning of time, I answer that He was in Himself, occupied in contemplating and loving Himself, enjoying His glory, and having no need of any of the creatures which His power and goodness have since drawn out of nothing.

3d. God is eternal and unchangeable. Here below, everything passes, everything changes and renews itself. Man grows and declines, he learns and forgets, he labors and rests. So also in nature, the earth has its seasons; plants and animals their change. But God does not change, my brethren; all in Him is unalterable. He is unchangeable in His existence, because He knows neither childhood nor old age. He is unchangeable in His knowledge, for He knows from all eternity what has been, what is, and what will be. He is unchangeable in His will, for what He wills to-day He has always willed, and He wills for all times to come. Thus, when we say that God repents, or that we can bend His wrath, or that He pardons, we mean merely that we change in His regard, and that, by our virtues or by our crimes, we oblige Him to reward or to punish us. It is with God, under this respect, as with the light of the sun, which is agreeable or disagreeable to us, according as we look at it with a clear or with an injured eye. It is not the sun that changes, but it is ourselves that change.

4th. God is almighty: *I believe in God, the Father Almighty.* It is this that the Creed teaches us; and it mentions only one attribute of the divinity, because it is the most striking and the most apparent for us, and because it is by His almighty power that God has created heaven and earth, of which there is mention in the same article of the Creed.

God has a sovereign or almighty power, because He depends upon nobody, because He has no master above Him, and because nothing limits the infinite extent of His perfections. Not only did He create the world out of nothing, but He could have created an infinite number of worlds, infinitely more beautiful and more perfect than the one upon which we live, and likewise with one word He could destroy and annihilate them.

From this divine almighty power flows the possibility of miracles, as well as the happy or unhappy immortality which He has prepared

for us in the next life. God evidently can deviate from the laws of nature which He has Himself established; and He has been the master to appoint for the just an unending happiness, and for the wicked eternal torments. However, because God is almighty, we must be careful not to conclude that He can do evil. No, my brethren, because, on the contrary, the faculty to sin necessarily indicates a defect of power; the almighty power consisting in doing all that one wishes and as one wishes, but not in doing what one does not wish.

God is *everywhere*. He himself speaks of His immensity in the most magnificent terms. *I fill heaven and earth*. He tells us through the mouth of His prophet: *Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool* (Is. LXVI. 1). *Behold, O Lord*, cried out the prophet David, *if I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, even there also shall thy hand lead me* (Ps. CXXXVIII.). God is in heaven by His glory and love; upon earth, by His providence; in hell, by His justice; and everywhere by His essence. He is everywhere, because, being infinite, it is impossible that He should not be everywhere, and in each place in particular as well as in all in general. We are surrounded by the immensity of God, says St. Augustine, as the fish is by the water and as the bird by the air. And it is in Him, says the Apostle, that we find life, movement, and being: *In Him we live, and move, and are* (Acts XVII. 28). But who can understand the immensity of God, present everywhere and present entirely in each place? Behold, my brethren, a mystery above our feeble reason. All that we know is that God is present in the manner of the spirits who occupy no space, as the soul in the body, and who may find themselves even in the most infectious places without being affected.

But a more important consequence which results from this great truth is that God being everywhere, He sees and hears all, as we see the things which we have before our eyes, and as we hear the noise that strikes our ears; but He sees and hears infinitely better: *All things are naked and open to His eyes* (Heb. IV. 13). He sees what passes in the most obscure darkness and in the most retired places, as if it were done in broad daylight. He sounds and penetrates even the most secret recesses of our soul. He knows distinctly our thoughts, desires, and intentions. He sounds the joints and marrow of the

bones, says the Prophet, and searches the most hidden movements of the heart: *The searcher of hearts is God* (Ps. VII. 10).

If such is the case, what a subject of consolation for the just man when he remembers that God is the witness of all his thoughts, and that everywhere, wherever he may find himself, and in whatever state he may be, God is always with him! But, on the other hand, what a subject of fear and fright for the sinner, to know that he can do nothing, not even have a criminal thought, without God as a witness! O you, therefore, who may be tempted to offend the Lord, or you who do not avoid the occasions of sin, remember His holy presence, and say to yourselves: If my father, or my mother, or my confessor were to see me, how I would feel ashamed! I would tremble with fear; and yet I am not afraid of the presence of a God, who sees me, who hears me, who will judge me some day, and who might permit me to fall into hell at this very moment! In whatever place you may be, my brethren, remember the presence of God, and this thought will sustain you, encourage and convert you; for there is no more useful and no more salutary thought than this: *Walk before me and be perfect* (Gen. XVII. 1).

6th. God governs all things and provides for all by His wisdom. In fact, it is God who foresees, wills, prepares, or permits all that passes in the world. Nothing happens except by His will. It is He who regulates the course of the stars and the seasons, who ripens the fruits and prepares the harvest. It is He who sends us the cold and the heat, the sun and the rain, abundance or misery. It is He who makes grain grow and bring fruit a hundredfold. It is He who covers the prairies with plants and who gives to all the flowers their beautiful shape and color. It is He who provides for the animals the food that is necessary for them, and who by His watchful care preserves all beings in the life which He gave them. But it is especially in regard to man that God's providence is conspicuous. He carries us in His arms, says Isaias, like a mother her children, and all that happens to us, agreeable or disagreeable, useful or harmful, is sent by Him either to reward or to punish us, but always for our advantage. It is only sin that He can neither command nor wish, but He permits it in order not to deprive us of our liberty. Oh, how great and admirable is this divine providence! And with what a sweet and tender confidence should we not rest upon it, and invoke it in all our troubles and needs!

To sum up in a few words all that we have explained of the divine perfections, we will say: God is a Being infinite in every perfection, and the different degrees of grandeur and goodness which we see in His creatures are only faint reflections of the infinite perfections of God. God is an ocean of goodness and perfections, an ocean without bottom and without shores. He is an incomprehensible Being which the angels in heaven themselves cannot understand. What a profound respect, therefore, do we not owe to His holy and adorable majesty! Ah! what miserable atoms and vile dust of the earth are we in the presence of this great God! Formerly it was permitted only to the high-priest of the Jews to pronounce the holy name of *Jehovah*. One of the most illustrious and learned men of the last centuries, Newton, inclined his head every time he pronounced the holy name of God. A great sinner who expiated the errors of her youth by long and most austere penance in the wilds of the desert, and became a great saint, the hermit Thais, did not even dare to pronounce the name of God. When your lips, my brethren, repeat this holy name, may you always do so with sentiments of profound veneration, thankfulness, and love. Amen.

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## III. INSTRUCTION

### First Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity*

I. There is a God. This we have proved in the preceding instruction, both by faith and reason. But there is only one God, and there can be but one God, as the first article of the Creed teaches: *I believe in one God.* In fact, were there several gods they would be either equal or inferior to one another. If they were equal, none would be God, because the plentitude of the divine perfections would be divided among several similar beings, and consequently none would be sovereignly perfect. And were we to suppose them inferior to one another, evidently only the greatest and the most powerful one could be God. Then we would fall into the error of the pagans

who adored a number of ridiculous and infamous deities, to whom they attributed the vices and passions of man.

II. But though there is but one God, there are three persons in God, and these we call the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And this truth is not less certain than the other, because faith teaches this in the most formal manner. *There are three*, says St. John, *who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one* (I. John v. 7). *Go*, said our Saviour to His apostles, *teach and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. xxviii. 19). What can be clearer than these words? Moreover, what do we recite in the Creed? *I believe in God the Father — I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son — I believe in the Holy Ghost.* . . . Are not the ceremonies of the Church always performed, and the Sacraments always administered in the name of these three adorable persons? *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*

III. The mystery of one God in three divine persons — this, my brethren, is the greatest and most adorable of all our mysteries, because it is the basis, the foundation of the Christian religion. But it is a mystery which we cannot understand, and which we should not even try to understand, because it is infinitely above our comprehension. One day, St. Augustine, walking on the seashore, was reflecting on this impenetrable dogma, and asking himself how there could be only one God, and nevertheless three persons in God, when he noticed a little child continually drawing water from the sea in a shell, and pouring it into a small hole which it had dug on the shore. "What art thou doing, my child?" said the great Doctor.—"I intend to pour the sea into this little hole."—"But dost thou not see that it is impossible?"—"Oh!" answered the child, "so will it also be impossible for you to conceive what you wish to understand." Perhaps this child was an angel whom God had sent to Augustine to rebuke his pride.

IV. However, although infinitely above human reason, the mystery of one God in three persons is not at all contrary to reason, for we do not say that three Gods are one God; but we say that three persons in God make only one God, and why? Because they have only one and the same nature, and one and the same divinity. We must not represent to ourselves the three divine persons as three persons similar to us, having body and soul, living separately one from another, and

each possessing a different nature. In God these three persons are perfectly spiritual, occupying neither position nor space, proceeding from one common principle in the most ineffable manner, and forming altogether only one and the same entire being which is God. Behold how Bossuet explains this mystery: "God thinks substantially, perfectly, eternally. . . . And in thinking He knows something substantial, perfect, eternal like Himself. This is His begetting, His eternal and perfect generation. . . . It is thus that He is Father and that He gives birth to a Son and He is loved by the Son. This love is substantial like the thought, perfect and eternal like this, and it is this mutual love of the Father and the Son that we call the Holy Ghost." In other words, if we may presume to explain Bossuet, we would say, the Father begets the Son in thinking by Himself, by contemplating His infinite grandeurs and perfections; the Son is nothing else but the thought, the substantial image of the Father; and for this reason He is called the *Word*. The Father and the Son love each other with the most pure and most perfect love; and this love of the Father and the Son we call the Holy Ghost.

V. We thus see that these three adorable persons are well distinguished from one another. Indeed, the Father produces the other persons, whilst neither of the others produces Him; He is a principle without a principle. The Father and the Son produce the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost produces neither the Father nor the Son. The Father is neither begotten nor produced; but the Son is *begotten* by the Father, by the way of the understanding. The Holy Ghost is not begotten, but *produced* through the Father and the Son, by the way of the will. The Father is the first person, because He is the form and origin of the other persons; the Son is the second, because He is begotten through the Father, and the Holy Ghost is the third, because He proceeds from the Father and the Son. This distinction of the three divine persons is found clearly expressed at the baptism of our Saviour, where it was the Father who spoke, the Son who was baptized, and the Holy Ghost who descended in the form of a dove.

VI. However, these three divine persons, although very distinct from one another, form only one and the same God, because they have only one and the same nature and divinity. Just as the three faculties of our soul: memory, understanding, and will, although differing from one another, form, nevertheless, only one soul, because they have one

and the same nature. The nature of a thing, my brethren, is that by which it is what it is. Thus, the nature of man is to have a body and a soul. The nature of God is to be infinitely perfect. Now, the perfections of the Father are the perfections of the Son; as those of the Father and of the Son are the perfections of the Holy Ghost. Thus the Father is eternal; but the Son is also eternal, because he is eternally begotten through the Father; and the same can be said of the Holy Ghost who is eternally produced through the Father and the Son. The Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, and the Holy Ghost is almighty; and it is the same in regard to all the other divine perfections.

These three adorable persons having only one and the same nature, are, therefore, perfectly equal; and there is among them neither superiority, nor preëminence; and although we say that the Father is the first, the Son the second, the Holy Ghost the third, this language does not suppose any inequality of perfection, but simply indicates the order of origin. In God there is no more perfection in being the first than in being the last, because in God everything is infinite and perfect.

From this unity of nature flows as a necessary consequence the inseparability of the three divine persons: where the Father is, there also is the Son, and there is the Holy Ghost; whatever the Father wills, the Son wills, and the Holy Ghost wills; what the Father does, the Son does, and the Holy Ghost does. Consequently, we must believe that the Son and the Holy Ghost have contributed to the creation as much as the Father, to whom it is attributed only because it is a work of power; that the Father and the Holy Ghost have contributed to our redemption although it is attributed exclusively to the Son as a work of wisdom; finally, that the Father and the Son have contributed to our sanctification as well as the Holy Ghost, to whom it is attributed only because it is an act of love. So, also, we must conclude that the Father and the Holy Ghost are present in the Blessed Eucharist, as well as the Son, although in a different manner; for the Son is present there as God and as man, whilst the Father and the Holy Ghost are present only as God. Hence we have no more obligation towards one than towards another of these three divine persons, and we must adore and invoke all three equally, although we can pay them our homage separately.

VII. Let us not attempt to fathom any further this ineffable dogma, or penetrate the mysterious grandeurs of God; let us not seek

to sound the abyss of the infinite. God has spoken and the Church has defined; that must be sufficient. Therefore, let us content ourselves with believing and adoring. Let us adore God the Father as our Creator and Preserver; let us adore God the Son as our Redeemer; let us adore the Holy Ghost as our sanctifier. The angels and saints in heaven have no other occupation but to celebrate the praises of the holy and adorable Trinity, by that sublime canticle which they repeat continually: *Holy, holy, holy is the God of hosts.* Let us do the same upon earth; let us be filled with the same sentiments of respect and love which animate the blessed spirits in heaven. But let us not be content with adoring the three divine persons; let us also invoke them, and invoke them often. In this consoling mystery everything inspires us with love and confidence. It is in the name of the Blessed Trinity that we were baptized, that we were confirmed, and that we are absolved in the sacrament of penance; and it is the Trinity which is for us the only source of all grace and salvation. Let us remember the Holy Trinity, especially in our troubles and in our dangers, and at the beginning of our principal actions. The most useful practices are the sign of the cross, a short prayer that we cannot offer with too great attention and respect, and the *Glory be to the Father*, which is an homage rendered to the adorable Trinity, — a simple and lively prayer, welling up from the depths of our heart.

St. Simeon, the Stylite — that prodigy of penance, who fasted during the entire season of lent, without taking any kind of nourishment, and who, inspired and upheld by divine grace, spent forty years upon a column without sitting or lying down, and whom not only the common people but even kings came to see through devotion or curiosity — recited hardly any other prayer but the *Gloria Patri*, "Glory be to the Father." The Church, as we know, grants numerous indulgences to those persons who, associated together, recite seven *Glory be to the Fathers* three times a day. These are powerful motives often to adore and to invoke the Most Holy and adorable Trinity. Therefore, as it shall be always the basis of our faith and of our worship, let it also be always the object of our respect, and of our love and gratitude. Amen.

## IV. INSTRUCTION

### First Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Creation*

I. After having instructed you on the existence of God, and of one God in three divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, there remains for us to speak of His works, that is, of the creation of the world, of the angels, and of man in particular.

This world did not always exist. The history of the nations which goes back only a few thousand years, the newness of the arts most necessary for life, which are still being improved every day, and the recent discoveries of immense countries, as that of America, all go to show not only that there has been a time when this world did not exist, as we behold it to-day, but also that its origin is not of such a very remote date. There was a time when there were neither sun nor moon nor stars; a time when there were neither plants nor animals, neither day nor night, neither light nor darkness, neither sea nor earth nor heavens,—a time, finally, when God alone existed, having produced nothing outside Himself, and finding His happiness in contemplating His own glory and adorable perfections in the silence of eternity.

II. But who could create the world? That is, who could draw out from nothing the heavens and the earth and those immense globes, whose number and grandeur the most lively imagination is insufficient to represent to itself?

Certainly, the world did not create itself. Neither is the world the work of chance; for chance is an idle word, which has neither being nor life, which expresses only an ignorance of the causes of events, and which is consequently incapable of producing any effect.

Therefore, my brethren, it is God and God alone who, by His almighty power, could create the world. This is what we profess to believe in reciting the first article of the Creed: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.* To create, as we have said, means to draw out of nothing. But who else but God could make anything whatever without preëxisting matter? Masons build houses, but they have stones and cement; painters

make pictures, but they need paper or cloth and colors. Their whole art consists merely in changing and improving forms and figures. When there is question of giving to a thing the existence which it has not, it is only the Almighty who is capable of doing that. All the men and all the kings of the world together could not create one single grain of sand.

III. God created the world by one single word: *He spoke and they were made* (Ps. xxxii. 9). There were no laborers, no tools, no implements, because there were none yet in existence. His all-powerful word supplied all this; and His word is nothing else than His will. It is Moses who relates the wonderful history of the creation of the world — the most authentic history of all, and to which all human sciences are obliged to render homage. This is how this great historian, who wrote only under the dictation of the Holy Ghost, relates this astonishing wonder: —

God created the world in six days, or spaces of time. Undoubtedly, He had no need of all this time to consider and to complete His work, for in an instant, and by a single act of His will, He could have created and perfected not only this world such as we see it, but He could have created and perfected thousands of others. Why did He will to employ "six days" at the work of creation? For many reasons, undoubtedly, which we do not know; but perhaps, also, to show us that He acted with a sovereign independence; that He did only what He pleased and how He pleased, and, also, to give us the example of labor during the six days of the week, with the obligation of rest for the seventh day.

*In the beginning*, says the sacred writer, *God created heaven and earth.* But the earth was at first only a confused mass of beings, or rather of seeds of beings, mingled together, without distinction, without order, and without the qualities which should soon embellish them. Then God said: *Let there be light. And light was made and He divided the light from the darkness, and thus was formed the day and night* (Gen. i. 3–4). Such was the work of the first day. God made light succeed darkness in order that man might give himself up to labor and provide for his wants; darkness succeeds the light in order that man might more easily taste the sweetness of sleep necessary to rest his faculties and renew his exhausted strength.

On the second day God made the firmament, and *divided the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above it*

(Gen. i. 7). The firmament is the space which extends from the surface of the earth to the extremity of space. Imagination cannot represent to itself this immense space. The sun is nearly one hundred millions of miles from the earth. Learned men conjecture that there are fixed stars twenty-seven times further away than the sun, and perhaps beyond these there are millions of others infinitely more distant. . . . What must not be the immensity of a God who fills such a universe! . . . All nations together are before Him only as a grain of sand. What is the most powerful and greatest man when compared with God? Let us adore His infinite majesty, my brethren, and let us humble ourselves at the thought of so much grandeur on the one hand, and so much nothingness on the other.

The earth was still wholly covered by the waters and mingled with them. On the third day, therefore, God assembled in one place all the waters that were under heaven, and He called this the sea by tracing limits which He forbade it to pass: *Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further* (Job xxxviii. 11). Then He commanded the earth to bring forth green trees, each producing seed according to its kind.

The earth thus adorned and embellished became a worthy sojourn of man. What a magnificent sight should one day offer itself to his view! What an infinite variety of plants, what freshness of foliage, what brilliancy of flowers, and what sweetness and liveliness of colors! Indeed, to use the words of our Saviour, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as richly as a lily of the field. With what transports of admiration and love must man have been seized in leaving the hands of his Creator and appearing in the midst of this world so new to him! St. Bernard said that the oaks of the forests were his teachers, and that at their feet he was often wont to meditate on the grandeurs of God. With what a lively and profound impression of the infinite power of God must the first man have been penetrated when he beheld himself placed in the bosom of a nature so mysterious and so wonderful.

On the fourth day God made two great lights, the sun and the moon. They are called thus, because they are not only greater than the stars, but because, being nearer to us, they appear to us as such and give us more light. The sun which lights and warms the earth into fruitfulness is an image of the God, the sun of justice, who is the glory and happiness of the saints in heaven and

the principle and source of all the graces on earth. The sun travels like a giant above the earth, without deviating one particle from the route that has been traced out for it. Do we labor as faithfully for the glory of our divine Master, and obey as faithfully the laws which He has imposed upon us?

On the fifth day God commanded the waters to bring forth fishes and birds, and in an instant a countless multitude of fishes swarmed in the seas and rivers, and an infinite number of birds filled the air. The birds present to us some instructive lessons. Let us listen to the language of the saints: Just as the birds, they say, come down to the ground only to look for nourishment, so also should man habitually raise his mind and heart towards heaven; and just as the birds alight on the ground only after having observed whether any snares may have been laid for them, so, also, when man ventures into the world, he should exercise the greatest prudence, because it is full of traps and snares placed therein by the enemy of his soul.

On the sixth day God commanded the earth to bring forth living creatures, cattle, beasts, etc., each according to its kind; and immediately the earth produced a countless number of animals, some of which were destined to nourish man, to clothe him, to guard and to defend him, to assist him in his labors, and for other ends which we often do not know, but which, undoubtedly, are always good and worthy of the divine wisdom. Finally, God ended His work by the creation of man, the lord of nature, and the masterpiece of His hands, who, with the angels alone of all creatures, should be capable of celebrating His glory and recognizing His benefits.

Such is the abridgment of the account which Moses gives to us of the work of the «six days» of the creation. What beauties, what wonders in the whole, and in each of its parts! The power and wisdom of its Author shine out everywhere. Let us cry out in the language of the prophet: O, my soul, bless the Lord! All the world is full of Thy magnificence! May all creatures praise Thee forever! May the heavens and the earth and all that Thou hast made glorify Thee forever and ever! Amen.

## V. INSTRUCTION

### First Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Angels*

I. Holy Scripture does not tell us formally on what day God created the angels. Some holy Fathers believed that it was when God created the light; and others, when He made the firmament. However this may be, it is a matter of faith that there are angels. The Sacred Books often make mention of them; and we profess to believe in the angels when we recite the Creed, and when we say: *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.*

The nature and perfections of the angels, their number, the unfortunate fall and the punishment of some, the fidelity and reward of the others, their employment in heaven and on earth, the services which the good angels render to us, the hatred which the fallen angels bear towards us, are the points which we have to examine in this instruction.

II. What are the angels? The angels, says the Catechism, are pure spirits whom God makes use of to lead men to execute His will. We call them *pure spirits* to distinguish them from our soul which is also a spirit, but which is united to a body. When we see the angels represented with a body similar to ours, it is only to call them to our mind, and because they have often appeared under this form. The good angels are represented under the figure of winged youth, to show their innocence and their swiftness in executing the orders of God. The bad angels are represented under the figure of serpents, because it was under this form that the devil tempted our first parents in the earthly paradise; and under the figure of wild beasts, to show their strength and fury. Being *pure spirits*, the angels are exempt from the infirmities and needs to which bodies are subject; they are immortal like our soul, in the sense that they had a beginning, as our soul had, but like it they will have no end.

III. We do not know the number of angels God created; but it is certain that the number was very considerable. The holy man Job says that the angels are without number, and the prophet Daniel, as well as St. John, in the Apocalypse, assures us of having seen thousands and millions of them. This multitude of heavenly spirits is

distributed into three hierarchies, and each hierarchy into three choirs. The first hierarchy contains the seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones; the second the dominations, the virtues, and the powers; and the third the principalities, the archangels, and the angels. However, we call all the celestial spirits angels.

IV. In what state were the angels created? God created them in the state of grace and sanctity and adorned them at the same time with the most sublime qualities. Exemption from all sin and from every inclination to sin, a pure and holy love, and a will always inclined towards good — these were the supernatural gifts with which they were endowed. Great understanding and science, with power, agility, wonderful beauty, and perfect happiness — such were the natural gifts with which they were enriched: "In them was the perfection of nature and the fullness of grace," said St. Augustine.

But not all of them preserved these precious gifts. Lucifer and a great number of others soon became puffed up with pride, on account of their brilliant qualities. Far from acknowledging that God was their author, far from being thankful to Him, they believed themselves equal to Him, and that they could do without Him. They refused Him their love and obedience, and raised against Him the standard of revolt. But the chastisement of so enormous a crime was not long delayed. Hardly had they consummated their wicked attempt when God raised the arm of His justice and ignominiously drove them from heaven, created hell, and hurled them into it for eternity. Such was the lot of the bad angels whom we call the spirits of darkness or devils.

We see, my brethren, that it was pride and nothing else that caused the loss of this numberless multitude of celestial spirits. Oh, how inexorable is the justice of God in not giving them either the time or the means to repair their crime! Can we sufficiently detest the vice of pride, the source of so many misfortunes? If a single thought of pride could cause the eternal loss of millions of rebellious angels, what may those Christians expect whose life is one long succession of sins of pride, of vanity, and self-love!

Fearful as was the justice of God towards the bad angels, His goodness and liberality towards the good were equally remarkable. To reward them for their fidelity and submission during the time of their trial, He raised the veil which until now had hidden Him from

their eyes; He showed Himself to them face to face and revealed Himself as He is. He put them in possession of all the celestial delights and overwhelmed them with an eternity of glory and happiness.

V. What is the office of the good and of the bad angels? In hell the bad angels are forever cursing and blaspheming the justice of God which chastises them. Upon earth they lay snares for man, tempt him, and endeavor, by all possible means, to drag him down to hell, because they are jealous of his happiness. God allows this in order to render our virtues more meritorious and worthy of a great reward. But we need not fear their malice and fury. God is faithful to His promises, and He will never permit us to be tempted above our strength. "The devil can solicit, he can roar like a lion," says St. Augustine, "but he cannot bite any except they are willing to be bitten." To conquer the devil and repel all his attacks, we need only be resolved to do so, with the help of God. But we must will it with all our energy, and know how to make use of the proper means. The most powerful weapons are watchfulness, fasting, and prayer. The sign of the cross is also an excellent means to put the enemy of our salvation to flight.

As odious and despicable as is the work of the bad angels, equally admirable and loving is the office of the good angels. They sing the praises of God eternally in heaven, execute His will upon earth, and watch over our interests. Among the heavenly spirits there is a great number surrounding the throne of God's majesty, awakening the echoes of heaven with their sublime canticle: *Holy, holy, holy is the God of hosts.* That is the office of the cherubim and seraphim who are the most elevated in glory. Others, as the archangels, are charged to announce upon earth the will of the Most High, and to execute His orders. Thus they appeared in olden times to Abraham and Lot to admonish them of the vengeance which God was preparing against the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. They appeared to Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, Tobias, and to the prophets of the Old Testament. The archangel Gabriel was sent to the high-priest Zacharias to declare to him the birth of St. John the Baptist, and to Mary to announce the mystery of the Incarnation. Faith teaches us, also, that there are angels who continually watch over us in all the circumstances of life: *For He hath given His angels charge over thee* (Ps. xc. 11). We call these our guardian angels.

VI. The services which the good angels render to us are too great, and our duties towards them are too important, to pass over in silence.

Prayer, watchfulness, and protection constitute the threefold ministry which our guardian angels exercise towards us. Our guardian angel — for each one has his own — never ceases to pray for us, and to beg of God the graces necessary to us. He offers to God our own prayers as well as our works, as the archangel Raphael did for Tobias: *I offered thy prayers to the Lord* (Tob. XII. 12). He watches over us to warn us against the snares of the devil, and to defend us against his attacks. As much as the infernal spirit is anxious to ruin us, so much and more still is our good angel interested in our salvation. Not only does he interest himself in the salvation of our soul, but also in our health and corporal life. Thus, the archangel Raphael enchained the devil who had killed the seven husbands of Sara. *The Lord had given His angels charge over thee*, says the prophet, *to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone; thou shall walk upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shall trample under foot the lion and the dragon* (Ps. XC. 11–13).

Although we cannot see our guardian angel, he is always at our side to defend and to protect us. In a thousand circumstances, perhaps, he has saved our life. When lightning falls at our side without harming us, when we escape the jaws of a wild and furious animal, when we are preserved from accidents of water and fire, from falls, from epidemic diseases which might threaten our health or our life, believe me, it is our guardian angel to whom most often we owe our deliverance. Not content with watching over us, he consoles us in our troubles, he assists us with his good inspirations, and tries by every means in his power to be useful to us.

In return for so many signal services, my brethren, what are the duties we have to fulfill towards our good guardian angel? First of all, we owe him "thankfulness for his benefits," says St. Bernard. Indeed, after God and the Blessed Virgin, is there anybody in heaven or on earth to whom we are more indebted? When the archangel Raphael had guarded on his journey and brought back safely the young Tobias, the father called his son and said to him: *What can we give to this holy man who took care of thee?* (Tob. XII. 1.) And they were of a mind to offer to him half of their goods. So also, my brethren, when your guardian angel has preserved you from a danger,

or saved you from some temptation, you cannot, indeed, offer him temporal goods of which he has no need, but you can, at least, offer him love for love.

A second duty towards your guardian angel is "respect for his holy presence," says, again, St. Bernard. The angel whom we have continually at our side is a prince of the heavenly court, and one of those sublime spirits that surround the throne of the divine majesty. Whereever we may be he sees us, hears us, and touches us, so to say. How, then, can we dare to commit in his holy presence those shameful actions which we would not dare to commit before the least of men? Ah! if we could only understand the pain which we cause to this faithful friend by our sins!

Finally, says St. Bernard, we should "invoke him with confidence." On the one hand he interests himself so much for us, and on the other he has so great a power with God — why, then, should we not have recourse to him? Why should we not implore his assistance in all our trials and in all our needs as a friend implores the aid of a friend, as an unfortunate man the aid of a benefactor, as a child that of its father or mother? Yes, my brethren, we should often invoke our guardian angel. We should invoke him morning and evening, and often during the day; we should consult him in our projects, and should communicate to him our secrets, and make him our confidant in all our troubles. The more confidence you have in your guardian angel, the more he will lavish his care upon you, and the more graces he will obtain for you. O good angel who art ever at my side, who seest and hearest me, I honor and bless thy holy presence! I thank thee for the numberless services thou hast rendered me! I ask pardon for all the pain I may have caused thee by my malice and ingratitude, and I promise to be more faithful in the future. Amen.

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## VI. INSTRUCTION

### First Article of the Creed (*Concluded*)

*On the First Man*

I. The angels had been created, the stars revolved in the heavens, and the earth was loaded with fruits, when the Eternal Father,

addressing the other two Divine persons, said: *Let us make man to our image and likeness* (Gen. 1. 26).

When a prince is to make his triumphal entry into a city, the inhabitants are careful to prepare for him magnificent apartments, to adorn and ornament all the places where he is to pass. Man was to be the king of creation, he was to be the epitome of all creation. As St. Gregory says, man was to share existence with the stone, life with the plants, feeling with the animals, and intelligence with the angels. And so, according to the beautiful remark of Bossuet, whilst until now God had made everything by commands: *Let light be made. . . . Let there be a firmament made amidst the waters*, etc., when there is question of the creation of man, the divine persons hold counsel together, and agree to make man according to their own image and likeness. What a high idea God gives us of our own nature!

II. In order that man should not be proud of his beautiful prerogatives, and that the remembrance of his origin should be always for him a powerful motive of humility, God determined to draw his body out of the slime of the earth, and give to him the name of Adam, which signifies "earthly." But at the same time he lavished upon him greater gifts than upon any other creature which had appeared thus far upon earth. Consider his majestic bearing, his upright stature, the head raised towards heaven, whilst the eyes of all animals are bent towards the earth. Consider the beauty, the strength, the suppleness of man, the look mild and proud by turns, that expression of his features, in which are reflected all the sentiments of the soul; is there anything like it under the sun?

III. But this was only the material part of man's being. However beautiful and perfect the body of man may have been, it was of itself unworthy of the end for which God had made him. Man was not made for this world alone, although the world was created for him; he was created to love and to glorify his Master. It was necessary, therefore, that man should be endowed with an intelligence capable of knowing Him and a heart capable of loving Him. In a word, he had to have a soul, but not a purely sensitive soul which perishes with the body, like that of the brutes, but an intelligent and rational soul, a soul that should never die, like the happy spirits in heaven.

My brethren, God gave this spiritual and immortal soul to man by the breath of life: *He breathed into his face the breath of life, and*

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*man became a living soul* (Gen. II. 7). By this divine breath we must be very careful not to understand something material and perishable, as the air or vapor which goes forth from our mouth. No, God being a pure spirit, His breath can be only spiritual and immortal as God Himself.

This is why it is said that God made man according to His own image and likeness. It is not by the body that man resembles God, but by his soul. How does our soul resemble God? It is a pure spirit, like God, free and immortal, like God; and by its three distinct faculties, memory, understanding, and will, it is a striking image of the Most Holy Trinity. Thus, when our body perishes, our soul does not perish. This is one of the fundamental points of our holy religion. Upon the immortality of the soul is based the dogma of a future life; and the existence of another life forever happy or unhappy, is the sanction of the commandments and the groundwork of the morals of the Gospel. If there were neither heaven nor hell, who would submit to the laws of God and the Church, often so difficult and so painful? And if our soul were to die with the body; if after our death all would be over for us, as for the brute, for whom would be the rewards or punishments of the other life?

IV. Man is, therefore, a rational creature, composed of a body and a soul. The soul of man is an *immortal spirit*, made according to *the image of God*. The soul of man created according to God's image! What a dignity, what a noble origin! And what a degradation and ingratitude, when he soils his soul by sin! "Therefore," says St. Ambrose, "man know thyself, what thou art and what thou shouldst be." If it is a crime of high treason to drag in the mire the picture of a prince, what an outrage and sacrilege to prostitute to the devil the image and likeness of God! The soul of man is made *to know God, to love and possess Him.* What a noble and sublime end! We have not been created, my brethren, for the perishable goods and pleasures of this world, for they are incapable of satisfying the whole extent of our desires; we are born for something greater. We are made for God and for the possession of His glory, and our heart will never rest, except in God.

V. Let us return to the creation. God, after having created the first man, said: *It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a helper like unto himself* (Gen. II. 18). And at the same time He cast a deep sleep upon Adam, a kind of rapture and ecstasy, during

which He took from his side one of his ribs, and formed a woman, breathed into her an immortal soul, and called her Eve, which signifies *mother of the living*. In taking from Adam a part of himself from the region nearest the heart, God wished to teach us that there should reign between man and wife the most perfect union, that they should form one heart and soul, as they form only one body: *And they shall be two in one flesh* (Gen. II. 24).

From this first union all men descend. From this we draw our origin. And, although there are nations so different from one another, in color, in the shape of the head, in the features of the face, in character; although some are white men, like the Europeans, and others black, like the Ethiopians, and yellow, like the Mongolians, and red, like certain tribes of America, it is none the less true that we all come from the same stem, and that Adam and Eve are the first parents of all. The distinctions of body which have since arisen among men have their source in the differences of food and climate. God wished to make us spring from one common father, in order to establish a relationship among all, so that we all should form only one and the same family. Happy should we be, if we looked upon ourselves always as brethren and if we constantly loved one another as the children of the family.

VI. In what state were Adam and Eve created? God created them, says the Catechism, in the state of innocence, that is, in justice and holiness. When they went forth from the hands of the Creator, they were pure and spotless and were perfectly agreeable to Him. Their bodies were entirely subject to their soul, their senses to their reason, and their reason to God. They loved Him and were loved by Him; they were like two angels in an earthly body, having no other occupation, no other enjoyment, but that of praising and blessing God's holy name and doing His holy will in all things.

Besides the supernatural gifts of grace, God gave them the gift of intelligence which made them know all that was important for them to know; a docile will which always inclined them towards good, and a happy disposition which had no inclination towards evil. *I have found that God made man right* (Eccl. VII. 30). Created as they were in the state of a mature age, and exempt from the weaknesses of childhood, they enjoyed a vigorous constitution and a perfect health. They were not subject either to heat or to cold, to disease or to death: *For God created man incorruptible* (Wis. II. 23). He had placed

them in a delightful abode which, says Holy Scripture, *God Himself had planted with His own hands* (Gen. II 8). Here they were in need of no other clothing but their innocence, of no other shelter but the shadow of the forests. Fruits of all kinds provided abundantly for their nourishment, whilst the song of the birds, the perfume of the flowers, and the verdure of the fields, in the midst of a continual spring, delighted and enchanted all their senses. Nothing in this earthly paradise was wanting to their happiness. Oh! my brethren, would that our first parents had known how to profit by their happiness! After having passed upon earth the time which God had destined for them, they would have entered into the possession of eternal happiness, without being obliged to pass through the horrors of death!

VII. But alas! it was not to be thus. You know that there were in the earthly paradise two trees whose fruits surpassed all the rest by their wonderful properties. One was the tree of life, called thus because it should preserve them both in life and health; the other, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was the fruit of the latter that God had forbidden them to eat, under pain of death. He had so commanded them in order to show to them that He was their Master; and in order that, by their obedience, they should merit the eternal happiness for which He had created them, but which He wished to give them only after they would have merited it. There was nothing more just than this commandment, and nothing easier to execute.

But man did not remain faithful. Satan, the rebellious angel who had been transformed into a demon, became jealous of the happiness of our first parents and conceived the odious project of ruining them. For this purpose he assumed the figure of a serpent, the most cunning of all animals, as well as the most poisonous, and addressing the woman as the weaker and more easy to seduce, he said to her: *Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?* And the woman answered him saying: *Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise God hath commanded us that we should not eat. . . . lest perhaps we die* (Gen. III. 1). Perhaps! she commences to doubt! *No, you shall not die*, said Satan, *for God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil* (Gen. III. 4–5). And upon this word she ate thereof, and she gave to her husband who also ate.

Such was the disobedience of our first parents, a disobedience so much the greater as it was entirely willful. They could have kept their innocence without difficulty, because of all the graces with which they were overwhelmed, and because their nature was entirely inclined towards good.

Moreover, when we consider, with St. Augustine, the gravity of this crime, we will find that it contains in itself all the other crimes. First, it was an ingratitude towards God, so much the blacker and more hateful as they had received so many more favors. It was the most insolent pride, because they wished to be equal to God. It was a homicide, and the greatest of all homicides, because they knew that by losing themselves they would cause the loss of all their posterity. This disobedience of Adam and Eve was, therefore, an enormous crime, and the greatest of all crimes, or, as St. Augustine says, "an incomprehensible ruin, and a sin of incomprehensible enormity."

VIII. What punishment, then, was great enough for such a crime? Hardly had Adam and Eve committed the sin, when they beheld themselves robbed of that beautiful garment of innocence which until now had formed their sole raiment and apparel; their intelligence, before so lively and brilliant, was steeped in darkness, and their hearts, before so pure and calm, were agitated by the storm of a hundred passions. From that moment they were subject to that law of sin, to the concupiscences which should be, in the course of time, the source of so many disorders and the cause of so much damnation. At the same time they were ignominiously driven from the earthly paradise and condemned to till the earth and eat their bread in the sweat of their brow. They were made subject to death, to all the diseases of body and soul. To complete their misfortune, eternal damnation should inevitably be their share, if before dying they did not do penance. O justice of God, how inexorable art thou! O sin, accursed sin, shall we ever commence to understand thy hideousness and thy malice!

IX. But, my brethren, Adam by his sin did not fall alone. He also caused the loss of all his descendants until the end of the world. This is a truth of faith about which we are not permitted to entertain the least doubt. It is revealed to us in hundreds of places of Holy Scripture, especially in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, v.12, where it is said that sin has entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and that thus all men have become subject to death,

because all men have sinned in a single man: *As by one man sin entered this world, and by sin death; and so death passeth upon all men, in whom all have sinned.*

A mystery, undoubtedly, which we cannot understand; but a mystery which explains many others, particularly that inclination which we all feel towards evil, and with which we were not primitively created. Without desiring to sound the depth of this mystery, we can, nevertheless, offer considerations which will enlighten our feeble intelligence and will serve to show us that it has nothing contrary to reason. Adam, in his state of innocence, represented his entire posterity. Our will was held to be contained in that of our common father. We can imagine that God spoke to him thus: "Adam, if thou perseverest in thy submission to my orders, thou shalt be happy, as also all thy descendants; but if thou transgressest my command, thou shalt be lost and thou shalt cause the loss, also, of all those who will spring from thee." Had we been there we would have willingly subscribed to this proposition of God, because it was more than probable that Adam would persevere. The transmission of original sin resembles what passes in nature and in society. It is thus that every day we behold innocent children share the lot of a guilty father. It is thus that a tree damaged at the root can bring forth only bad fruit; that a spring infected gives only corrupted water; that a nurse communicates to the child, with her milk, the disease with which she is tainted.

A striking proof that there has been a primitive fall, is the general belief of all nations. With history open before us, it would be easy to establish that there is not a single nation that did not believe, in a more or less explicit manner, in an original fall, because all have had expiatory rites to purify the child at its entrance into life. Voltaire, who certainly cannot be suspected of too much credulity in matters of religion, makes this avowal, when he says in one of his books entitled: "Philosophy of History," that "the fall of degenerated man was the foundation of the theology of all ancient nations."

I will insist no further on this point; why should I, after the Holy Ghost has spoken in so clear a manner, and since we assert that the entire Christian religion is based upon the dogma of original sin? The Blessed Virgin Mary, alone of all mankind, was preserved from the general corruption of original sin. St. John, the Baptist, was sanctified in the womb of his mother. So, also, was Jeremias.

But what must console us is that this misfortune has not been without redress, and that, conformably to the promise which God hastened to make to our first parents, a Redeemer has come who has abundantly compensated for all our losses. This will be the subject of our next instruction.

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## VII. INSTRUCTION

### Second Article of the Creed

*And in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord*

I. After the deplorable fall of our first parents and the dreadful decree of their condemnation, the only resource left to Adam and to his whole posterity was the divine mercy. The abyss into which original sin had thrown us was too deep for us to rise out of it by our own power. As sin had wounded and outraged an infinite majesty, a satisfaction of an infinite price was due to God. His sovereign justice required a reparation equal to the offense; so that all the penances, all the virtues, all the prayers, in one word, all the merits of all men and of all the angels together, could never have given to God a sufficient satisfaction. Besides, all being sinners, all being at enmity and in disgrace with an outraged God, what could we do meritorious for our salvation? What could we do that was worthy of drawing upon us the mercy of the Most High?

II. God was in no way bound to grant mercy to us. Without in the least derogating from His goodness and love, He could have left us in the state of perdition into which the sin of our first parents had plunged us.

However, through an excess of goodness, for which we can never show sufficient gratitude, God had pity on our great misery. As He had not made man to condemn him for all eternity, He did not desire to leave him in the damnation which he had brought upon himself. Hardly had Adam consummated his crime and undergone the sentence of divine justice which excluded him and all his descendants from the abode of the blessed, when God announced the word of pardon and mercy, by promising to him that *from the woman would rise one who*

*would crush the head of the serpent* (Gen. III. 15), that is, who would break down the empire of the demon upon earth and free man from the yoke of his tyranny; who would reconcile him with God, and restore to him all his rights; in a word, God promised man a Redeemer.

III. But who should this Redeemer be? Ah! my brethren, here I need your full attention in order that you may understand the mystery which I announce to you. What had man done by revolting against God? I have told you already that he had committed a sin of an infinite malice. Why? because he outraged a God whose majesty is infinite. Indeed, the gravity of the offense is always measured by the dignity of the person offended. Thus a word or an action that would be only a slight fault against a father, would be a crime of high treason against a king, and a sacrilege against a pontiff. But when man has committed an offense of an infinite malice, a satisfaction of an infinite price is needed. Would man ever have been able to offer to God such a satisfaction? No; for the merit of an action is drawn from the dignity of the person who does it. Now, it is quite evident that there is no creature that can produce an action of an infinite value, because every creature is by nature limited and finite. Thus, men, however holy one might suppose them to be, like the patriarchs and the apostles, would never have been able, by their prayers, sacrifices, works of mortification and penance, to repair in a worthy manner the outrage which sin had done to God. The angels themselves, in spite of all their perfections and the excellence of their nature, would never have been able to do it. Only a God could offer to an outraged God a sufficient satisfaction. But as God is essentially happy and incapable of suffering, in order to be able to expiate sin it was necessary for Him to become man, that is, to assume a nature capable of suffering. Hence it was indispensable that the Redeemer be God and Man at the same time; man to suffer, and God to give an infinite value to His sufferings.

IV. Did God send this Redeemer upon earth immediately after the sin of Adam? No, according to the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, He sent Him only some thousands of years after. There were reasons for this delay — reasons unknown to us, but always worthy of the Lord's wisdom. All we can suppose is that He desired that man witnessing the intense darkness and frightful debaucheries with which the earth was covered in the course of ages, should

understand to the full extent the fatal consequence of his crime, should deplore his sin and ingratitude, and learn to sigh for a Redeemer.

In order that mankind should preserve the belief in a Redeemer to come, God was careful to renew His promise from time to time. First he renewed it to Abraham, when he said to him: *I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sands that is by the seashore . . . and in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. xxii. 17–18). He told him that from his race should come the one that was to save mankind. He renewed this promise by the mouth of Isaias who foretold that *a virgin would conceive and bear a son who would be called Emmanuel* (Is. vii. 14). He reminds mankind of the Redeemer through David and other prophets who, long before the coming of the Savior, foretold the time and place of His birth, His humiliation, His greatness, His miracles, His death, resurrection, and ascension, in a word, all the circumstances of His life long before they came to pass.

V. It was by this faith in the promised Redeemer that those who lived before the coming of our Saviour could save themselves. This was, indeed, a consoling truth for all men who lived before the advent of Jesus Christ. If men could have saved themselves only after the sacrifice of Calvary, how deplorable would be the lot of those millions of unfortunates who lived before this great sacrifice! Their eternal loss would have been inevitable; and, nevertheless, we would be obliged to bow in submission to the decrees of divine justice. But it was not thus; and it is the belief of the Church that mankind before the coming of Christ could save themselves, through the merits of the Redeemer who has since come. During the thousands of years that preceded His advent upon earth, it was sufficient for salvation to have faith in the Messiah announced by the prophets and to observe the natural law engraved, from the beginning, by the hand of God, in the heart of all men, and later on given to Moses on tables of stone. Thus among the Jews, the patriarchs and prophets, and all those who believed in the future Messiah, could be saved. Such were, for example, Adam and Eve, about whose salvation we are not permitted to entertain any doubt; Abel, with whose sacrifice God was pleased; Henoch, who, on account of the holiness of his life, merited to be removed, both body and soul, from this world without passing through the horrors of death. Such were, again, Noah, Melchisedech,

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Tobias, Moses, David, and so many other holy personages of every sex and state, whose faith was so lively, says St. Paul, that it made them surmount all the obstacles opposed to their salvation.

Even among the pagans, all those who believed, like Job, in the promised Messiah, were undoubtedly saved through Him, provided that they faithfully observed the precepts of the natural law. It is true, these holy souls could enter heaven only when Jesus Christ, on the day of His ascension, came to open for them its gates. But though they could not enter heaven, neither did they go to hell; they were detained in a place called *Limbo* where, without enjoying the beatific vision, they were nevertheless free from all pain.

VI. What must we conclude, my brethren, from all this? That we cannot be grateful enough to the Lord for having drawn us from the abyss into which the sin of our first parents had cast us. You have seen that through original sin we were all lost, without resource. God was not bound to redeem us. Without derogating in any manner from justice, He could have abandoned us to our unfortunate lot, as He did with regard to the bad angels who revolted against Him. He could have done this so much the more justly as, in order to redeem us, He had no other means except to sacrifice His only Son, the object of all His love, because, as we have said already, all the prayers and all the mortifications of both angels and men would have been powerless. Therefore let us give thanks to God. Let us thank Him for allowing us to be born in the light of the Gospel. For, although we could have saved ourselves under the law of Moses or under the natural law, how much easier is it not for us to work out our salvation in the bosom of the Christian faith!

However, in order to be saved it is not sufficient that a God has redeemed us. It is our duty to profit by His merits. It is not sufficient that heaven is open for us; we must follow the road that leads to it, we must exactly practice the duties which the law of God imposes upon us, and carefully avoid all that it forbids. The Redeemer by His coming upon earth has furnished us with the means to do this. He has founded an infallible Church to instruct us; He has established a sacerdotal ministry to direct us; He has instituted seven Sacraments to give us grace. Now, it remains for us to make a good use of all these means. Woe to us, if, aided by so many graces, and by so many lights, we should still be lost! Our judgment would be much

more severe, and our punishment much greater than if we had never known the Gospel, or if the divine Redeemer had never come to save us. As the fruit of this instruction, let us redouble our love and gratefulness to God, who has loved us so much, and let us renew our zeal in the work of our salvation. Amen.

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## VIII. INSTRUCTION

### Second Article of the Creed (*Concluded*)

I. In the preceding instruction, my brethren, we have said that God, through an effect of His infinite mercy, and without being obliged by His justice, had promised to send to man a Redeemer; and that in order that mankind might not lose the remembrance of this promise upon which their salvation would depend, He was pleased to remind them of it from time to time through His prophets. These men did not limit themselves to merely announcing the coming of a Redeemer; although they lived so many centuries before Him, they foretold in the most precise manner the different circumstances of His birth, life, and death, absolutely as the Gospel relates them; and they announced the very time when He should arrive among us.

The patriarch Jacob foretold that the Saviour of mankind would come *when the sceptre* (that is, *the sovereign power*) *should be taken away from Juda* (Gen. xlix. 10). Aggeus and Malachias had announced that the Messiah would come in the time when the temple of Jerusalem, built after the Babylonian captivity, should still exist. Finally, Daniel had pointed out the year when He would be born, that is, within the space of four hundred and ninety years, beginning with the day when the order would be given for the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.

Already, my brethren, these events pointed out by the prophets had been literally fulfilled; the Jewish people had lost its nationality and fallen under the yoke of the Romans; the temple of Jerusalem was still standing, but in a few years it was to be completely destroyed, never to be rebuilt again. Finally, the four hundred and

ninety years of Daniel were drawing to an end, when, amid the general expectation, and when all eyes were turned towards Judea which was to be His cradle, the Desired of the nations came upon earth, the One who was to reconcile heaven and earth, the great Redeemer of guilty man, the promised Messiah.

II. Who is this Messiah or Redeemer that came upon earth? It is Jesus Christ, the God whom we adore, and the only one through whom we can be saved. And how do we know that Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer? Because He and He alone unites in His person all the characteristics of the Messiah, and in Him was literally fulfilled all that the prophets had foretold. We need only compare the history of the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ, such as it is reported in the Gospel, with that which the sacred authors had foretold, to be convinced that it is the one and the same person.

Jesus Christ came upon earth at the precise time when the Redeemer was to come. He was born of a Virgin, of the family of David, in the city of Bethlehem, conformably to the prophecy of Isaias. His life was passed in the constant and most wonderful practice of all the virtues; His meekness, patience, and charity knew no bounds. He was the just man *par excellence*. Betrayed by one of His disciples, He was sold for thirty pieces of silver, overwhelmed with ignominy and insults, made to drink gall and vinegar, His feet and hands were nailed to an infamous gibbet, He was robbed of His garment for which lots were cast. Finally, after having breathed His last, He was placed in a tomb, but preserved from corruption; and He rose to life again the third day, as David and other prophets had foretold in the most precise manner.

Jesus Christ is, therefore, that Redeemer promised and announced from the beginning of the world. This is the basis of our Christian faith. And woe to the one who does not believe this! The Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah, and what has become of them? The pagans did not believe in Jesus Christ; and look into what an abyss of errors they have been plunged! O Jesus, our Saviour, what thanks should we not render to Thee! Yes, we acknowledge Thee with lively sentiments of gratitude and love; it is Thou that hast been sent from heaven upon earth to redeem mankind; and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved.

III. Who is Jesus Christ, what is His origin, nature, and person? — Jesus Christ is the Son of God, not as men are through grace or

adoption, but really and by nature, or generation, according to the expression of the prophet: *Thou art my son; this day have I begotten Thee* (Ps. II. 7). This fundamental truth we find declared in the Scriptures in too precise a manner to leave any room for doubt. What did the angel say to Mary, when he came to announce the mystery of the Incarnation? *The holy One that shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God* (Luke I. 35). At the baptism of our Lord by John the Baptist, on the shores of the Jordan, what did the voice of the heavenly Father reveal? *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased* (Matt. III. 17). Martha said to our Lord: *Lord, I believe that thou art Christ the son of the living God who art come into this world* (John XI. 27). St. Peter, in his famous profession of faith, exclaimed: *Thou art Christ, the son of the living God* (Matt. XVII. 16).

During the whole course of his public life, Jesus Christ constantly called Himself the Son of God, to the great offense of the Jews, who, believing Him a mere man, looked upon Him as a blasphemer and wished to stone Him. But the time when He declared Himself most emphatically in regard to His heavenly origin, was when, dragged before Caïphas, during His passion, that impious pontiff asked and adjured Him to say whether He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus Christ, who until now had kept the strictest silence, believes it His duty to declare Himself, in order to confirm a truth so essential, and He does not hesitate to answer: *Thou hast said it. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven* (Matt. XXVI. 64). Our Lord made this formal declaration, though He foresaw very well that by it He would bring upon Himself the sentence of condemnation.

IV. Since Jesus Christ, the promised Redeemer, is the Son of God and the only Son of God, does it not follow that He is God like His Father, and of the same nature with Him: *God from God, light from light, true God from the true God*, as the Church speaks in the Nicene Creed? Holy Scripture formally teaches this, and especially the apostle St. John, when he says that in *the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . and the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*, for the expression *Word* is the name given to the Son of God, the Son being the word or the substantial thought of the Father.

Such is, my brethren, after the dogma of the existence of God and of one only God in three divine persons, the greatest and most important of all the truths; it is the foundation of the entire edifice of the Christian religion. We cannot deny it without renouncing our baptism, without repudiating our title to disciples of the Saviour. Let us, therefore, often make acts of faith in this profound mystery, and may nothing, not even the fear of death, be ever capable of shaking our faith in it.

V. Jesus Christ is not only God, but He is man at the same time. This is what the apostle St. John wished to teach us, when he said that *the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us* (John 1. 14). He took a nature similar to ours; a body like ours, subject to the same wants and to the same infirmities; and a soul endowed like ours; with judgment, intelligence, and memory, with this difference that the faculties of the soul of Christ as man were incomparably more elevated and more perfect than ours.

Therefore, there are in Jesus Christ two natures, the divine nature and the human nature. The divine nature, because He is God, and the human nature, because He is man. These two natures are united in Him in the most intimate and inseparable manner, and still more closely than our soul is with our body; for the soul and body can be separated by death, whilst even at His death, the humanity of our Lord could not be separated from His divinity.

On account of this intimate union between these two natures, we often say things of the humanity of our Lord which are proper only to His divinity; and of His divinity, things which are proper to His humanity. We say that God was born, that He died. . . . Jesus Christ was not born, He did not die in so far as He is God, because God is eternal; but He was born only as man.

However, these two natures, although most intimately united, are nevertheless not confounded with each other, no more than the soul is confounded with the body which it inhabits. Each preserves the qualities and perfections which are proper to it. Thus, if you were asked whether Jesus Christ is eternal, you should answer that as God He is eternal, but not as man; whether He is almighty, yes, He is as God, but not as man. We must make a similar answer and the same distinction for the other properties which belong only to one or to the other of the two natures which are in Jesus Christ.

Because there are two natures in Jesus Christ we must draw the rigorous consequence, there are in Him also two understandings and two wills — the divine understanding and the human understanding, the divine will and the human will. As God, Jesus Christ knew everything and could not be ignorant of anything; as man, He had all the knowledges which the most perfect soul can possess, but nothing beyond that. Hence when He was asked when the end of the world would come, He answered that He did not know. As God He knew it, but not as man. It is the same with the two wills in Jesus Christ; as God He could wish a thing, and as man He could have a contrary inclination. We see a remarkable example of this in His agony in the Garden of Olives. His divine will desired the sacrifice which He was about to make for the salvation of the world; His human will begged that, if it were possible, the bitter chalice of the passion should pass away. However, in Christ the human will was always perfectly subject to the divine will.

Although there are in Jesus Christ two natures, Faith teaches us that there is only one person, the divine Person, or the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. This means that the Son of God and the Son of man do not make two Christs, but only one and the same Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and true God by His divine nature; the son of man and true man by His human nature. And as in Christ the man is united with the God, and not the God with the man, only the divine -person, and not the human person, subsists in Jesus Christ.

VI. Such are the teachings of faith on the great mystery of the Incarnation; a profound mystery and infinitely above our intelligence, but a mystery infinitely adorable, because God Himself has deigned to reveal it to us. Let us admire and bless the immense love which God shows us in this ineffable mystery. What more could He do for us than to sacrifice His only Son by uniting Him with our weak nature in order to clothe its infirmities and miseries, and expiate its crimes? What can be more glorious for our nature than to know ourselves thus associated to the divine nature! *O felix culpa!* "O happy fault!" cries out the Church, in speaking of original sin, "which has brought such a Redeemer," *quae talem meruit habere redemptorem.* Let us render unceasing thanks to the Lord, and let us show ourselves more and more worthy of the inestimable benefits of God by an increase of piety and love. Amen.

## IX. INSTRUCTION

### Third Article of the Creed: — Incarnation of the Word

*Who Was Conceived by the Holy Ghost*

I. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who came to redeem mankind, is, therefore, God and man at the same time. He is God, because He is the only Son of the Eternal Father; He is man, because He has a body and a soul like ours.

Whence did the Son of God derive this body and soul, and how was the mystery of the Incarnation accomplished? Faith will teach us this.

The third article of the Creed is expressed in the following terms: *I believe in Jesus Christ . . . who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.* What do these words mean? They signify that it was Mary who brought forth Jesus Christ, after having conceived Him in her chaste womb, not according to the ordinary ways of nature, but through the coöperation and almighty power of the Holy Ghost.

II. Listen to the history of this wonderful event, as tradition has handed it down to us: — There was at Nazareth, in Judea, a virgin of eminent sanctity, named Mary, whose virtues had attracted the regards of the Most High. Her father was called Joachim, and her mother Anna, both descendants from the royal family of David. At the age of three years her pious parents had permitted her to enter the temple in order to consecrate herself to the Lord, and, first of all the daughters of Israel, although of so tender an age, she made there a vow of virginity. Secluded in this holy asylum until the age of fifteen years, and under the care of the priests to whom she had been intrusted, after the death of her parents, when she was about twelve years old, she did not know the world. She divided her time between the study of the Holy Scriptures, manual labor, prayer, and the service of the altar. Adorned with the most lovely and most beautiful qualities, and powerfully seconded by divine grace, her heart was like a furnace of love for her God. She practiced humility, modesty, obedience, and all the virtues that befitted her age and sex, with a sovereign perfection. Her holiness was so great that she never stained her soul with the slightest venial sin. When she arrived at the age of fifteen, her

nearest relatives wished her to be married, and they chose for her a husband of the highest virtue, a man named Joseph, who, like her, was descended from the royal family of David. Mary consented to the marriage only under the condition that she should preserve her virginity untouched.

III. It was this virgin, so humble and so pure, whom God chose to become the mother of His only Son. When the time fixed by His wisdom had arrived, He sent to her the archangel Gabriel who announced to her the following consoling and beautiful words: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women* (Luke I. 28). Mary, who did not know whence such a salutation could come, was greatly troubled and alarmed at the words of praise which the angel of the Lord spoke to her. *Fear not*, continued the heavenly messenger, *for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob forever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end* (Luke I. 30–33).

What a magnificent promise! To conceive and bring forth the Son of God, and thus to become the mother of the Redeemer of mankind! Was there ever a greater honor, was there ever a privilege comparable to this?

But Mary remembers that she has made a vow of virginity; and for all the treasures of the world, she would not renounce this precious virtue. She asks the angel how this could happen, how this promise could be fulfilled: *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (Luke I. 34.) And the angel answered that God is above the laws of nature, that He changes them whenever He pleases, that the Holy Ghost would come upon her, that the power of the Most High would overshadow her, and that she would conceive and bring forth a son without losing her virginity, *because no word shall be impossible with God* (Luke I. 37). Once assured of becoming the mother of God without ceasing to be a virgin, she submits her will, and answers: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to thy word* (Luke I. 38). And at the same instant the great mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished. The Almighty power of the Most High overshadowed Mary; the Holy Ghost formed in her womb a human body to which He joins a human soul. The

Son of God came down from heaven to unite Himself with this body and soul, just as a sun-ray that descends upon earth without becoming detached from the sun. Thus was realized the ineffable union of human nature with divine nature in the bosom of the purest of virgins.

IV. How astonishing and wonderful are the prerogatives of Mary in this mystery! She conceives and brings forth Jesus Christ, she becomes really and incontestably His mother. But if Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ, what follows from this? It follows that she became the Mother of God. Of course we do not mean to say that Mary brought forth the divinity, for that would be absurd; but since in Jesus Christ the divine nature is inseparable from the human nature, and since there is only one Person in Him, namely, the divine Person, we can say with truth that Mary is the Mother of God. It is thus that we call a woman the mother of her son, although she begot only his body and contributed nothing towards the formation of his soul.

The Church has always honored and invoked Mary as the Mother of God. In the first centuries of the Church, an impious man, named Nestorius, dared to deny to Mary this beautiful privilege. But a General Council was held at Ephesus; the honor of Mary was vindicated, and the title of Mother of God was definitely attributed to her by a most solemn decision and amidst the applause of the Catholic world. Nestorius was anathematized and exiled to Africa where he was attacked by an ugly disease and died in misery and contempt. Whilst still alive his body began to putrefy, and his tongue, eaten by worms, fell off in pieces — a just chastisement for the blasphemies which he had uttered against the Mother of God.

What an honor for a mere creature to be raised to the dignity of mother of God! Can we imagine anything greater, more wonderful, and more sublime! What is the glory of all the angels and of all the saints together, when compared with the glory of Mary!

V. Another wonderful prerogative of Mary is her virginity. Although she conceived and brought forth Jesus Christ, she never ceased to be a virgin. She was a virgin before childbirth, during childbirth, and after childbirth. The prophet Isaias had foretold this: *Behold a virgin shall conceive* (Is. 1. 34). When Joseph, on his part, perceived that Mary, his spouse, was with child, he was troubled and resolved to leave her privately; but the angel of the Lord quieted him

by telling him that the One who was to be born of her was the work of the Holy Ghost; and that, consequently, his spouse was a virgin. Mary was a virgin before childbirth and she was also a virgin during childbirth. The divine Son of Justice went forth from the bosom of His mother like the flower which rises from a plant without damaging it, like the water which flows from its source without polluting it, like the light which penetrates glass without breaking it. The prophet had foretold this when he announced that not only should the virgin conceive, but should also bring forth: *Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son* (Is. VII. 14). Mary remained a virgin after childbirth. Could it have been possible that the bosom of Mary, sanctified by so many wonders, could be profaned by any creature? The title of Virgin has always been attributed to her, without restriction of time or circumstance; and the Church has always condemned those who dared to deny her glorious prerogative of perpetual virginity.

How great, then, should be our respect, love, and confidence towards Mary! Was there ever a holier, purer, and more perfect creature? She would have most willingly sacrificed the title of Mother of God, if she could not have acquired it without losing her virginity. Was there ever a creature enriched with so many graces, raised to so high a rank? She was honored with the incomparable dignity of Mother of God, she was destined to become also one day our mother, and to coöperate in the work of our salvation just as Eve, the first woman, coöperated in the work of our destruction. O Mary, be thou therefore forever blessed! And perish our entire being if thou art not ever after God, the object of our respect, confidence, and love!

VI. Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ, as we have explained; is St. Joseph, the spouse of Mary, also His father? No, my brethren, Jesus Christ as man has no father, and as God He has no mother. Jesus Christ is the real Melchisedech. As God He has a father but no mother, and as man He has a mother but no father. It was the Holy Ghost who, through His almighty power and without the intervention of any man, created a body for the Son of God in the chaste womb of Mary. St. Joseph was only the guardian and foster father of Jesus Christ, charged by Providence to watch over His first years and to provide for His wants. If Jesus Christ calls Himself sometimes *Son of man*, it is only to teach us that He is really man, and in allusion to a passage of Daniel (VII. 13), where it is related that in a vision,

the Messiah appeared to the prophet as *Son of man*, that is under the form of a man. So, also, when the Scripture sometimes calls St. Joseph the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is only because He was the spouse of His holy mother, and because he always had for Jesus the affection and the solicitude which a good father has for his son.

But we should not honor any less the chaste spouse of the purest of virgins. After Mary there is no saint in heaven who merits more our confidence and love. He was the head of the holiest family that ever lived in the world; he carried the infant Jesus in his arms; he was, for many years, the faithful companion and the trustworthy friend of Mary, his august spouse. What a power must he not possess in heaven with Jesus and with Mary! Let us invoke him often with confidence, and let us have for him the most ardent devotion. St. Theresa says that she never asked for any favor through his intercession which she did not obtain. Let us always try to imitate his virtues, particularly his chastity and humility: his chastity, because he always remained a virgin; his humility, because he never desired to leave the obscurity of his humble profession. He concealed his grandeur and appeared in the eyes of men only as a mere workman. By walking in his footsteps, and by often imploring his holy protection, we shall merit one day to share in his glory and happiness in heaven. Amen.

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## X. INSTRUCTION

### Third Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*Birth of Jesus Christ*

I. Nine months had elapsed since the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive and bring forth the Saviour, when the Emperor Augustus, desiring to know the number of his subjects, ordered a general census to be made, and obliged each one to be inscribed in the place of his origin. To obey this edict, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, being of the race of David, went to Bethlehem, the cradle of the royal family of David. It was thus that

God disposed political events for the fulfillment of Scripture. It had been foretold that Bethlehem of the tribe of Juda would be the place where the Messiah should be born. In Bethlehem was born the Son of God, the expected of the nations during thousands of years, the One longed for by the patriarchs and prophets.

When Mary and Joseph arrived at Bethlehem, the city was so crowded with strangers that they could not find a place in the inns. Mary and Joseph being poor, they were disregarded by everybody, and it was impossible for them to procure any other asylum but a stable. It was in this miserable place that Mary brought forth the Saviour of the world, and laid Him in a manger.

Let us listen to the teaching and wonderful lessons which Jesus gives us from the crib of Bethlehem. Why did he wish to be born in such a sad and poor state, He the King of kings, the Lord and Master of heaven and earth? Undoubtedly, He could have been born in a magnificent palace, He could have had around His cradle all the splendors of earthly kings. But, no! He not only came to save man, but also to show him the way to heaven. He desired to teach him by His example the practice of the great virtues which constitute in themselves alone the substance of all Christian life; humility, mortification, and the contempt of riches. This divine Master knew that man is naturally subject to three vices which are the cause of all his disorders: pride, sensuality, and avarice. And in order to weaken or to destroy them in our souls, by giving to us the example of the contrary virtues, He wishes to be born of a poor mother, in a place so little worthy of His infinite grandeur, and in a state of misery and suffering. O, you lovers of the world, you who sigh for riches, honors, and pleasures, kneel at the crib of Jesus, and there you will learn what to think of the world and its pomps. Do not think yourselves His disciples, do not expect to have a share of the reward which He has promised, if you walk in a path so different from that which He has trod during the whole of His mortal life.

II. It was on the twenty-fifth day of December, at the early midnight hour, that the Saviour came into the world. This blessed and glorious day we call Christmas. To commemorate this event, the Church has instituted that solemnity, beautiful among all other solemnities, the midnight office. On this day priests offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass three times, in order to honor the threefold birth of Jesus

Christ: 1st. That by which He proceeds from His Father from all eternity; 2d. That by which He was born in time from the Blessed Virgin Mary; 3d. That which makes Him to be born spiritually in our soul by faith and charity, and, sacramentally, by the Blessed Eucharist. From this glorious epoch dates the Christian era; so that when we say that we are in the year 1898, we mean that it is one thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight years since the birth of Christ.

III. There were at that time, in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, shepherds who passed the night in the fields, watching their flocks. As it is especially to the simple and humble souls that the Lord loves to communicate Himself, these poor shepherds were the first ones the Saviour called to His manger. He sent to them an angel who said to them: *Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger* (Luke II. 10–12). When the angel had announced these tidings a great number of other heavenly spirits chanted that beautiful canticle which we still recite every day at Mass: *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (Luke II. 14). The shepherds, enraptured by such wonders, said to one another: *Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass* (Luke II. 15). And having found the child lying in a manger, as the angel had announced, they did not doubt that it was their Saviour and God, and far from taking offense at the lowliness in which He wished to be born, as perhaps more than one among us would have done, they knelt down before their God, offered Him their homage, and went away publishing everywhere the wonderful news.

Who among us here, my brethren, does not envy the lot of these poor shepherds? Who would not consider himself fortunate, if he could visit the grotto of Bethlehem where these wonders were accomplished? Ah! my brethren, we need not envy these happy shepherds, the witnesses of the birth of the Saviour. We have a new Bethlehem among us, and every day the same God, the same Saviour, comes down to be born again upon our altars. Come, therefore, from time to time, to render to Him your homage. Come to Him to seek light and strength. Come to implore the graces of which you are in need. Especially on the night of Christmas, when we celebrate the anniversary of the coming of Jesus Christ among men, do not hesitate to

interrupt your sleep, to leave your house, and even to brave, if necessary, the rigors of the season, to hasten, as these pious shepherds did, to the cradle of Jesus Christ, to honor, by your presence, the mystical birth of our divine Master, and to pray to Him to come and be born also in your hearts.

IV. The child Jesus did not wish to call only the poor to His manger. He also called the powerful and the rich; not only the people of Israel, but all men and all nations. At the very time when the angels announced the great news to the shepherds of Bethlehem, a wonderful star appeared to the Magi. Who were these Magi? They were princes or philosophers from the East who professed the pagan religion. The prophet Balaam had foretold that a new star would announce the birth of a great King who would rule over the whole earth. Hardly had they noticed that extraordinary star, when, enlightened interiorly and moved by the inspiration of grace, they set out to seek that Child-King to pay Him their homage. The star went before them and led them first to Jerusalem; but there, as if to try their faith, it disappeared. What did the Magi do? They went directly to the court of Herod, and, without fear or human respect, they asked him where the King of the Jews was to be born. Herod, having consulted the priests and doctors of the Law, answered them that it was at Bethlehem where He must be born; and he begged them, that when they had found Him to come back and let him know, in order that he also might go and adore Him. Miserable hypocrisy! This ambitious and cruel prince only desired to find the child in order to kill it; he was afraid that the new King might rob him of the throne he had usurped. The Magi, learning what they desired to know, hastened on their journey; and behold! on leaving the city, the star appeared again to them, and led them to Bethlehem. But here a new trial arose! Undoubtedly, they expected to find the new King in a magnificent palace, amidst gold and silver, and surrounded by a brilliant court; and they see only a stable, a manger, and a child wrapped in swaddling clothes. But their faith was enlightened, and they recognized in this child the Saviour of the world. Kneeling before the manger, they offered gold, frankincense, and myrrh, symbols of royalty, divinity, and humanity; royalty by the gold, divinity by the frankincense, and humanity by the myrrh. Then admonished in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back into their own country by another road.

What beautiful examples do we find in the conduct of the Magi! What an obedience, and what an eagerness to follow the star that called them to Bethlehem! Hardly had they perceived it when, without hesitating a moment, they left their homes and families, and exposed themselves to the fatigues of a long journey: *We have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him* (Matt. II. 2). Let us, like them, be faithful to the voice of grace when it calls us to the practice of virtue. Far from listening to our passions or to the maxims of the world, we must say like the Magi: We have seen the light of grace, we have heard the voice of the Lord, and we come to rank ourselves under His laws. But, alas! is such our language and our conduct? You, especially, sinners, who have so long resisted grace, are you not afraid that God will abandon you to the blindness of your mind and to the hardness of your heart? The Magi, abandoned by the star, were not afraid to go and see Herod, the cruel king, even at the peril of their liberty and life. Do we brave the criticism of impious men, do we defy human respect, and practice our duties as Christians, no matter how difficult it is to do so? The Magi offer to the child Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh; such are the presents which he requires from us also: gold, the affections of our heart; frankincense, the fervor of our prayers; and myrrh, the works of penance.

Such is the story of the Gospel and the vocation of the Magi to faith. It is generally believed that it was on the thirteenth day after the birth of Jesus Christ that they arrived at Bethlehem. This is why the Church celebrates the feast of Epiphany, which signifies *manifestation*. This feast is so called, because on this great day God manifested His glory to the nations, and has called all nations in the person of the Magi to the light of the Gospel. Epiphany, therefore, is the anniversary of our vocation to Christianity. And as this is one of the greatest benefits which the Lord has granted us, one cannot exhort you enough to pass this day in sentiments of the most lively gratitude and of the most tender piety. Amen.

## XI. INSTRUCTION

### Third Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*Childhood of Jesus Christ. His Hidden Life*

I. Eight days after His birth, the child Jesus was circumcised. Circumcision was a ceremony of the Old Law which God had ordained as a sign of the Covenant which he had made with Abraham, and as a distinctive mark of His people among all the nations of the earth. This precept affected only the male children, and although probably it had not the proper effect of effacing original sin, nevertheless the circumcised person confessed himself guilty, and professed his belief in the Redeemer to come. Our Saviour was not bound at all to submit to this painful and humiliating law; but He wished to teach us by His example: 1st. To obey faithfully and punctually all the commandments of God and of the Church; 2d. To humble ourselves at the sight of the miseries with which we are filled, and generously to support all the pains and afflictions that befall us; 3d. To circumcise ourselves by rooting out from our heart all the vices to which it might be subject, and by chastising our bodies through the practice of mortification and penance.

The Church makes commemoration of the circumcision of our Lord on the first day of the year. On this holy day, we should offer to God the new year, and pray to Him to pardon the faults which we have committed within the year that just closed. The beginning of the new year should inspire us with reflections, on the rapidity of time, and the approach of death and eternity. I am here to-day, the faithful Christian says to himself, but where shall I be to-morrow? How many who on last New Year's day were as young as I am now, and were in as flourishing health as I am to-day, are gone forever! If I were sure that this would be the last year of my life, how would I spend it? . . .

II. On the day of Circumcision the name Jesus was given to the divine Redeemer, conformably to the order which the archangel Gabriel had given to Mary and Joseph: *Thou shalt call His name Jesus* (Matt. 1. 21). But what does the name Jesus signify? It signifies *Saviour;* and how worthy is it of our respect and love? *Of*

*our respect*, because it has come from heaven, and because it was in virtue of this holy name that we all have been saved; *of our confidence*, because our Lord Himself has declared that all we ask of His Father in His name, will be given to us: *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do* (John xiv. 13); *of our love*, because it reminds us of the immense love of a God towards men, and of all He has done for our salvation. The apostle St. Paul says that *the name of Jesus is above all names; that in this name every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth* (Phil. ii. 10). And, indeed, what can be compared to the name that has reconciled heaven and earth, worked so many wonders, and which is still the greatest terrors of the demons? The saints had always the most tender piety towards the holy name of Jesus. St. Bernard assures us that he found joy and sweetness in this holy and adorable name alone, and that books and conversations were insipid to him if he did not read or hear the holy name of Jesus. Jesus, he added, is honey to the lips, a melody to the ear, and a joy to my heart. We read in the life of St. Ignatius, Martyr, that after his death, they found the name of Jesus engraved upon his breast in letters of gold. Let us imitate such beautiful examples, let us often invoke the holy name of Jesus; but always with sentiments of the most tender devotion. The Church, in order to render to this sacred name the honor it merits, grants an indulgence of twenty days to every one who bows his head whenever the name of Jesus is pronounced.

The name of Christ signifies "anointed." The Saviour is so called on account of his threefold quality of king, prophet, and priest, for in ancient times kings, prophets, and priests were anointed. Jesus is king, because He reigns and will reign eternally over all souls; He is prophet, because nothing is hidden from Him, and He knows the future as well as the past; He is priest, because after having immolated Himself on calvary He offers Himself every day upon our altars in the Sacrifice of the Mass.

III. Besides the law of Circumcision, there was another which obliged women to present themselves in the Temple forty days after childbirth for a male child, and eighty days for a female child, in order to be purified and offer to God, through the hands of the priest, their new-born child. They could redeem the child by offering a lamb and a turtle-dove, or only two turtle-doves, if on account of their poverty they could not offer a lamb. The Blessed Virgin submitted

herself to this law, although she was not obliged to do so. She submitted herself: 1st. Through a spirit of humility, not wishing to distinguish herself in anything from the other women, although she had not contracted any stain in her childbirth; 2d. Through a spirit of obedience to the law; 3d. Through a spirit of piety, wishing to testify to God the respect which she had for His holy temple, and to show to the Christian mothers that after her example they should never re-enter the church, after childbirth, without having been purified through the blessing of the priest. Hence the ceremony of churching of women after childbirth, so ancient and so respectable, still generally practiced in the Church.

The child Jesus, by wishing to be presented in the Temple forty day after His birth, like other children, gives us also very important lessons. He teaches parents that they cannot be too prompt in consecrating their children to the Lord, in order that He may bless them and that He may remain their sole master, a consecration which they should often renew in the course of life. Moreover, He teaches children to give themselves to God from their most tender youth.

IV. A third circumstance which the Gospel makes known to us about the childhood of Jesus Christ, is the flight into Egypt. Herod had asked the Magi to return to Jerusalem to inform him of the place where the new-born King of the Jews was to be found, saying that he also wished to go and adore Him. But the Magi, being admonished in a dream of the evil designs of Herod, returned home by another way. Herod, seeing that the Magi did not return, and afraid that this new-born King would rob him one day of his kingdom, ordered at Bethlehem, and in the surrounding country, a general massacre of all the children below the age of two years, a fearful example of the excesses to which ambition can lead. But Joseph, instructed by an angel from heaven, led the child Jesus and His mother into Egypt. When Herod was dead and there was nothing more to fear, they returned to Judea. The Church ranks those slaughtered children as martyrs, and she honors their memory on the feast of the Holy Innocents, which is celebrated on the third day after Christmas.

V. The last circumstance in the childhood of Jesus, is His journey to Jerusalem at the age of twelve years. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph went, according to the law, to celebrate the feast of the Pasch in Jerusalem, and they took the child Jesus with them. After fulfill-

ing this religious duty, they started for their home at Nazareth; but they found themselves surrounded by an immense number that had come for the same motive, and, according to the custom of the country, the men and the women traveled in separate groups. Neither Mary nor Joseph remarked that the child Jesus was missing, each thinking He was with the other, but at the end of a day's journey they looked for Him in vain. Hastening back to Jerusalem, they found Him after a search of three days. God had permitted the child to be left alone in Jerusalem in order that He might commence to manifest Himself to men. Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple, in the midst of the Doctors of the Law, listening to them, asking them questions, and confounding them by the wisdom of His answers. When His mother seemed to reproach Him because He had thus concealed Himself, He said to her: *How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?* (Luke II. 49.) He thus wished to teach us, even from His childhood, that He had come upon earth only to labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

VI. From the age of twelve years until the age of thirty, all that the Gospel says of Jesus Christ, is that *He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men* (Luke II. 52), and that having retired to Nazareth with His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, *He was subject to them* (Luke II. 31). *He advanced in age*, that is, His body became stronger in the course of years, as with other children; *He advanced in wisdom*, that is, wisdom manifested itself more and more as He advanced in age, just as the sun which, although always equally luminous in itself, shines with greater brightness to our eyes, in the proportion as it rises more and more above the horizon.

It is in this manner, my brethren, that children, when they have attained the age of reason, should seek to grow in wisdom and virtue. It is thus they should render themselves more and more agreeable in the eyes of God, by forming themselves to the duties of the Christian life. But is this what is generally done? Is it thus we have acted ourselves? Alas! how many years of childhood and youth have been only years of discord and dissipation? How many, young in years, are already old in vice? O children who hear me, if you are still so happy as to have preserved the grace of innocence, pray to the child Jesus to grant that you may always walk in His footsteps! And you sinners, of whatever age you may be, you who have had the

misfortune to abandon the ways of virtue, implore your infant Saviour to lead you back and to help you to remain faithful until the end.

Jesus Christ passed the first thirty years of His life near the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and, says the Gospel, *He was subject to them*. What a source of instruction and edification for us! Jesus Christ was always subject and obedient to Mary and Joseph, to two of His own creatures, and He was their master, their sovereign, and their God! And in what was He subject to them? In all things, even the lowest and most painful. He labored with Joseph and Mary, and occupied Himself with the humble cares of the household. He obeyed His parents with the most perfect exactitude and punctuality. He obeyed thus until He was thirty years old; and until that age He wished to remain ignored by all and unknown to the world. Can anyone conceive a modesty more perfect, a humility more profound? O, you who love the world so much, and who desire to appear among men, come to the school of Jesus! You who seek to distinguish yourselves among others by your knowledge, or your rank, or the richness of your dress, come to the school of Jesus, of Jesus the artisan, of Jesus the poor, of Jesus the unknown and forgotten! But you especially, disobedient and unruly children, who will not obey your father, or mother, or your superiors, come and learn from Jesus Christ! Ah! my brethren, how many Christians are there whose life is condemned by the humble life of Jesus! My brethren, if, in the past, we have not practiced the virtues of obedience, humility, and contempt for the vanities of this world, let us humbly ask pardon of God, and let us to-day take the resolution to be more faithful to the lessons and examples of our Divine Master. Amen.

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## XII. INSTRUCTION

### The Third Article of the Creed (*Concluded*)

*Public Life of Jesus Christ*

At the age of thirty years our Saviour commenced His public life. It was opened with His baptism by St. John and the fast in the

desert, and was continued by preaching, the working of miracles, and the practice of the highest virtues. These are the points which will form the subject of this important instruction.

I. St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus Christ, had been preaching penance to men, and administering the baptism of water, to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, whom he declared to be already among men, and whose power and dignity were so great that *he was not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes* (Luke III. 16). This baptism which he gave on the shores of the Jordan was not a sacrament that had the power to remit original sin; it was a mere ceremony which had no other efficacy than to dispose men to penance, and prepare for the true baptism by water and the Holy Ghost, which was to wash away their sins and open to them the gates of heaven. Although our Saviour had no need of the baptism of St. John, since He was holiness Himself, He nevertheless wished to submit Himself to it in order to give us the example of humility, by mingling with sinners, and by being looked upon as one of them. At His baptism heaven was seen to open, and the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove; and, at the same time, a voice was heard saying: *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased* (Matt. III. 17). This was a striking manifestation of the three adorable persons of the Holy Trinity.

II. After His baptism by St. John, which revealed to men His divine origin, and which is regarded as the first act of His public life, our Lord, *led by the spirit of God* (Matt. IV. 1), says the Gospel, retired into the desert, to prepare Himself by recollection, prayer, and penance, for the sublime ministry He was about to begin. He wished to teach us in what manner we should conduct ourselves, when there is question of choosing a state of life, and He condemned by His example those rash Christians who enter the matrimonial state, or who embrace the religious state, without having sufficiently consulted God in prayer.

Buried in the depths of solitude, and removed from all communication with men, our Lord fasted during forty days and forty nights, without taking any nourishment whatever. Astonishing prodigy, of which there had been only two examples since the beginning of the world, that of Moses, the legislator of God's people, and that of Elias, the chief of the prophets. In order to commemorate this fast, as also to remind us of the necessity of penance, the Church has

instituted the time of Lent. When this holy time arrives, each one should say to himself: If God, who was innocence itself, fasted forty days, is it not just that I, a sinner, should do penance? In the course of this long fast, our Saviour permitted the devil to tempt Him, in order to merit for us the grace to surmount temptations, and to teach us how we should resist them. Temptations are not an evil in themselves; on the contrary, they can become for us an occasion of great merit. But we must not seek temptations or expose ourselves willfully to them; and if temptations present themselves, we must be prompt in rejecting them after the example of our Divine Master.

III. We have come to the time of our Lord's public ministry. On leaving the desert, our Saviour entered into Galilee; but He had no fixed residence from this time. At first, He went about alone, after the manner of the prophets, visiting the cities, villages, and everywhere preaching the Gospel. But soon He chose twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples, and traveled over the whole of Judea. He preached in the synagogues, in the temple, on the mountains, on the shores of the seas and rivers, in houses, and even in the deserts, whither crowds followed Him. The people abandoned their labors and even forgot their meals in their anxiety to see and hear Him. On two occasions, our Saviour was obliged to work a miracle in order to give bread to a multitude of several thousands who had followed Him, and who had taken nothing to eat for three days. One day, a pious woman of Jerusalem, unable to contain her admiration, cried out: *Blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck!* And our Lord answered: *Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it* (Luke xi. 27).

The doctrine of this Divine Preacher, so wonderful and ravishing, was well calculated to excite zeal and enthusiasm. It was expressed in a simple and benevolent language, which made a profound impression upon all that heard it. The parables of the prodigal child, of the good shepherd, and of the marriage feast (figure of the Blessed Eucharist, to which all are invited, the poor and unfortunate as well as the rich and great), are examples of the sweetness, simplicity, and exquisite tenderness of our Saviour's preaching.

And how pure are the morals of His teaching! Is there a vice which they do not condemn, or a virtue which they do not prescribe? Before the time of our Lord, the rich alone were considered happy; but Jesus says: *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matt. v. 3). It was

considered a duty to revenge injuries, and He says: *Blessed are the meek, blessed are the peace-makers* (Matt. v. 4–5). It was considered a noble thing to aspire to the honors and dignities of the world; men sought to appear in pomp and splendor, and to attract the esteem and admiration of others, but Jesus says: *Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me* (Luke ix. 23). How sublime are the teachings of Jesus on purity of heart, fraternal charity, duty of prayer, and on divine Providence which takes care of the little birds and which gives such rich ornament to the flowers of the field! What new and wonderful maxims! No man, no philosopher ever spoke as He spoke. The evangelical morals are so holy, so touching, and so complete, that in all times, and even in the worst of days, in epochs of scandal and anarchy, the most impious men have paid homage to them.

IV. To these sublime teachings, Jesus Christ has indeed joined mysteries which reason cannot comprehend, such as His divinity, the trinity of persons in God, the original fall, the eternity of hell. But He has proved the truth of His doctrines by public and incontestable miracles, which no one can deny, except he rejects all evidence — devils driven out of the bodies of the possessed, storms calmed, the multiplication of loaves, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead to life; nothing could resist His power, all nature was obedient to His orders. He suspended nature's laws and commanded the elements at His will. And these wonderful miracles were wrought in an instant, without effort and without preparation; they were not wrought in secret, or before a few friends only, but in public places and in the assemblies of the scribes and Pharisees, His most bitter enemies, and before multitudes of the people.

One day as He came down from the mountain, whither the people had followed Him, a leper approached Him and said: *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean; and Jesus stretching forth His hand, said: I will, be thou made clean* (Matt. viii. 3). And forthwith he was healed from his leprosy. At another time, on entering Capharnaum, a centurion came begging Jesus to cure his sick servant; and Jesus said to Him: *Go, and as thou hast believed so be it done to thee* (Matt. viii. 13); and in the same hour the servant was healed. On another occasion He was in a boat with His disciples, and whilst He slept behold such a violent storm arose that His disciples, fearing

they would all be drowned, cried out to Him: *Lord, save us, we perish* (Matt. VIII. 25), and Jesus, rising, commanded the winds and the sea to be still; and a great calm ensued. Once, on entering Capharnaum, a paralytic was brought to Him on a bed carried by four men, and Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic: *My son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee* (Matt. IX. 2). And when some of the scribes who were present said within themselves that He blasphemed, claiming that it belonged alone to God to remit sins, He spoke to them thus: *What is easier to say, thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say: Arise and walk? But that you may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then he said to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house* (Matt. IX. 5–6). And the paralytic arose and returned into his house. You have all heard the story of the healing of the man born blind, to whom Jesus restored his sight with a little spittle; of the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus, and of the only son of the widow of Naïm, who was being carried to the grave, and of Lazarus who had been buried four days. Do these numerous and incontestable miracles not prove both the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the truth of the doctrine He preached? Who but a God could have acted thus? Jesus Christ declares that He is the Son of God, and God Himself. We must believe one of two things: either He is God, indeed, and then we have only to believe and adore Him; or He is an impious and sacrilegious impostor. But, in the latter case, we ask whence could He have the power to work so many miracles, and to suspend the laws of nature? If there is a God in heaven, could He have allowed this imposture, and lead men into error?

V. But, my brethren, it is not only by His doctrine and miracles that Jesus Christ has proved His divinity; He has proved this also by His heroic virtues and the incomparable holiness of His life. All that He recommended to others, He practiced Himself: *Jesus began to do and to teach* (Acts I. 1). Look on the picture the Gospel traces of Jesus: What love for God and what zeal for His glory! He passes whole nights in prayer, and His food is to do the will of the One that sent Him. What purity of morals! what humility! what disinterestedness! He passes His whole life in virginity; when He spoke with the Samaritan woman to enlighten and to convert her, His disciples were astonished to see Him converse with a woman. He is poor, and flees the honors and dignities of the world. When the multitude wish

to proclaim Him king, He retires into solitude; when the people wish to receive Him in triumph in Jerusalem, He escapes and goes into the country. How touching was His goodness! With what affection does He not receive the poor and unfortunate! He consoles them, He provides for them. He is not afraid to enter the houses of sinners, to eat with them and converse with them. He calls the poor His friends; He declares that He will hold as done to Himself whatever is done to the least among them. His heart burnt with love for all. He loved little children and wished to have them close to Him: *Suffer the little children to come to me*, and He threatened with the most severe punishments those who scandalize the little ones.

In a word, there is no virtue of which He did not give us an example and which He did not possess in its full perfection. In His whole life there is not an action in which one can remark the slightest fault or the least imperfection. He challenged His most bitter enemies, and said, with a noble boldness, that belongs not to man but to God alone: *Which of you can convince me of sin?* (John VIII. 46.)

During the sorrowful days of His passion, what patience and what kindness He manifests! What courageous and simple firmness in the midst of the most cruel treatment and the most frightful torments! Not a word of remonstrance escapes His lips. He prays for His executioners, and whilst they are inflicting on Him the most atrocious torments, He supplicates His heavenly Father to show mercy towards them: *Father, forgive them* (Luke XXIII. 44).

Was there ever a life comparable to His? And still I have sketched only a few traits. Read the Gospels for yourselves; read them with a docile and simple heart, and you will be touched and convinced. You will see that Jesus is truly the Son of God, our master and our model.

But if we are disciples of Christ, let us show it by our conduct. Let us humbly obey His laws, let us practice the virtues which He has taught us, let us follow in His footsteps, and let us have confidence in Him, and our works will not remain without reward. Amen.

## XIII. INSTRUCTION

### Fourth Article of the Creed

*Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Crucified, Dead and Buried*

I. So many virtues and miracles ought, undoubtedly, to have won for our Saviour the love and gratitude of the Jews. But no, holy and wonderful as His life was by His doctrine and His works, it was rendered the more painful by humiliations and sufferings. Jesus Christ had suffered at His birth in the stable of Bethlehem; He had suffered in fleeing into Egypt, to avoid the persecution of the cruel Herod; in short, He had suffered His whole lifetime, because, as the author of the "Imitation" teaches, the life of Jesus was one continual martyrdom.

When the Apostles' Creed says that Jesus Christ *suffered under Pontius Pilate*, the governor of Judea, it is to be understood of what He endured on the eve and on the day of His death. These two days were days of continual suffering: 1st. In the Garden of Olives, He fell into a mortal agony which brought on a bloody sweat. He was betrayed by the infamous Judas, taken prisoner by the soldiers, and led away as a criminal; 2d. He suffered before Annas, the father-in-law of Caïphas, the high-priest; He was slapped in His face, under the pretext that He had answered to the pontiff disrespectfully; 3d. He suffered before Caïphas, high-priest of that year; He was accused, condemned, spit upon, and outraged in every manner; 4th. He suffered before Pontius Pilate who, although he recognized the innocence of Christ, nevertheless did not dare to set Him free, for fear of making himself odious in the eyes of the Jews; 5th. He suffered before Herod who, deceived in his expectations of seeing Christ work a miracle, mocked Him by clothing Him in a white garment and sent Him back to Pilate; 6th. He suffered in the court of Pilate where He was scourged, crowned with thorns, and condemned to die upon a cross which He was obliged to carry upon His own shoulders to the place of execution; 7th. Finally, He suffered on Calvary, where He was crucified between two thieves.

In a word Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows. He suffered more than all the martyrs together. We cannot read the history of His passion, without being moved with pity for so much suffering. Even

had Jesus been the last and the meanest of men, no one could hear this sad story without shedding tears. But what a spectacle of patience and resignation! Jesus, in the midst of so much anguish and suffering, did not even open His mouth to complain, but permitted Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, dumb before those who struck Him. What a striking condemnation of our murmuring and complaints in our little trials and troubles!

II. Nailed to the cross, our Lord spoke seven times remarkable words, worthy of being engraved forever on our hearts. First: He prayed to His Father for His executioners: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Luke xxiii. 34). What a striking example of heroic charity! Second: He promised paradise to the penitent chief. What a consoling truth for sinners who are tempted to despair of salvation. Third: He addresses His mother and referring to her the apostle St. John, who was at her side, He said to her: *Woman, behold thy son* (John xix. 26), and turning to St. John, He said to him: *Behold thy mother* (John xix. 27). St. John at the foot of the cross represented all Christians, children of the Church. At that moment, my brethren, we all became the children of Mary. What a consolation! What a source of hope and happiness! Fourth: Oppressed by a burning thirst, Jesus cried out: *I thirst* (John xix. 28). It was thirst for salvation of man, thirst for our souls; but for drink the executioners offered Him gall and vinegar. Fifth: *It is consummated* (John xix. 30). God and man were satisfied. The justice of God was satisfied, the malice of man was satiated. Sixth: Jesus cried out to His Father: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* (Matt. xxvii. 46). Seventh: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Luke xxiii. 46). At these words, Jesus with a great cry bowed His head and died. At the same moment all nature was convulsed. The sun was darkened, the earth trembled, the graves opened, and the dead arose; the veil of the temple was rent in two. Some of the executioners were converted, and all went away striking their breasts and wondering at what had happened. It was on a Friday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a day forever memorable: the day of all days; but a day of sorrow and sadness, and which every Christian soul should spend in sorrow and penance, and in meditation on the sufferings of Christ.

III. Why did Jesus Christ submit to such horrible sufferings and to such a death? Jesus gave His life to redeem us; He suffered and

died in order to save us from the slavery of the devil, and to reopen to us the gates of heaven which had been closed through the sin of our first parents. He suffered and died, not only for us, disciples of the Gospel, but for all men without distinction. He died for pagans as well as Christians; for the savages who still roam in the woods, as well as for the most civilized nations: *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world* (I. John II. 2). By His death He has reconciled us with His Father — He has restored us to our rights to the celestial inheritance. Is our salvation certain, and is heaven assured to us? No; but it is open for us, and it depends only on ourselves to merit it. Those who live in infidelity or heresy can arrive at a knowledge of the truths of faith, if they practice the natural law engraved by God Himself on the hearts of all men, and if they coöperate with the graces which He grants them. And we, who are already in the possession of the true faith, shall infallibly enter heaven, if by prayer and the sacraments we apply to ourselves the merits of the blood of Christ, and if we walk in His footsteps, in the way of His commandments.

This, my brethren, is the mystery of Redemption: *Jesus Christ suffering and dying on the cross for us;* a mystery infinitely adorable and forever worthy of our respect, our gratitude, and our love!

IV. Undoubtedly, it was not necessary that Jesus Christ should undergo such suffering. The least of His sufferings being of an infinite merit, one sigh, one single tear, would have been more than sufficient to redeem the world and thousands of worlds a thousand times more guilty than ours. But, as He wished to give us an example of all virtues, His love for us was so great that He minded no measure, and He was satisfied only when He had shed the last drop of His blood for us. He chose death on a cross, because it was the most cruel and infamous of deaths, reserved only for slaves and the greatest criminals. Among the Jews it was regarded as the most shameful of deaths, and it was inflicted only on foreigners. Christ died for all in general, and for each one of us in particular, and each one of us has as much share in the merits of redemption as if these were for him alone.

Can any one imagine a greater love? If a king should die to save the life of the meanest of his subjects, what would you think? . . . And, nevertheless, it would be only a man dying to save another man. But a God dies to save criminals, and He foresees their ingratitude. Oh, ineffable love of God towards man! Who can sound its depth? But

let us also remember the rigorous and inexorable justice of God who will punish our sins!

If there is anything in the world that gives an idea of the enormity of sin, it is the sight or the remembrance of Calvary. In the Old Law God had exercised terrible vengeance against sin. He destroyed all mankind in the Deluge; Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire from heaven; the entire army of the Egyptian Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea, and thousands of Israelites died in the desert. What was all this in comparison with a God dying upon a cross to expiate sin? The sight of a God descended from heaven upon earth, nailed to an infamous gibbet and pouring out the last drop of His blood, in order to reconcile us with His heavenly Father, is the most striking proof of the incomprehensible rigors of divine vengeance. Hell itself, with all its torments, does not move me so much as the cross with its prodigies of humiliation and suffering; for in hell it is the guilty soul that suffers, but here it is Holiness itself; only vile creatures are there, but here it is the Creator, the Eternal One, who dies. Let us adore and bless the infinite mercy of a God to men; but let us also tremble at the sight of His justice.

V. The cross is the instrument of which Jesus Christ made use for the redemption of mankind, and the altar upon which He immolated Himself for the glory of His Father. Let us love and revere the cross. It teaches us the enormity of sin, the immensity of God's love for us, and the infinite rigors of His justice. What an eloquent preacher it is! A God praying for His executioners; a God abasing Himself and dying like a criminal on an infamous gibbet; a God suffering awful torments and outrages without even opening His mouth to complain! Was there ever a more perfect model of charity, patience, and humility?

Let us often meditate, my dear brethren, on the mystery of the cross. What sight is better fitted to instruct, to touch and convert our hearts! After the example of the saints, let us always cherish for the cross the greatest veneration and the most tender love. It is the symbol of our faith and the sign of our salvation. Let us salute it respectfully wherever we see it. Woe to him who is ashamed of the cross! St. Paul gloried only in the cross of Christ. Keep a crucifix in your house, and kneel before it from time to time. Carry a small crucifix about with you to remind you of the sufferings and death of Christ.

But above all, my brethren, let us make the *sign of the cross.* No prayer is more agreeable to God and more potent to drive away the devil and to draw down upon us the graces we need. Make the sign of the cross in the morning on rising, to offer to God the actions of the day, and in the evening on going to bed, to ask of God the grace to pass the night well. Make it at the beginning of your principal actions in order to purify your intention; before and after meals; in dangers and in temptations. Make it properly and with respect, and not mechanically and with distraction, as so many careless and indifferent Christians do. Begin by piously placing your right hand on your forehead, in saying with a respectful attention: *In the name of the Father*, and then on your breast, saying: *and of the Son*, and, finally, on the left and right shoulders, saying: *and of the Holy Ghost.* It is with the sign of the cross that the Church commences and ends all her ceremonies and offices. All the Sacraments are administered, and all the blessings are given with the sign of the cross. At baptism it was the sign of the cross that introduced us into the Church; in the hour of death it should be our last prayer.

The Way of the Cross is also a pious practice established to honor the cross and the sufferings of the Saviour. It is an eminently useful devotion on account of the mysteries which it recalls, and on account of the numerous indulgences attached to it. I cannot recommend too much this practice of piety, nor can I engage you too earnestly to follow our Saviour in the sorrowful Way of the Cross.

Finally, my brethren, another way of honoring the cross is to bear the crosses and trials the Lord is pleased to send us. Such are the infirmities that befall us, the contradictions of life and the reverses of fortune. If we are the disciples of a God who carried His cross to Calvary, let us also carry our own crosses, and let us carry them without complaint. Let us carry them with resignation and patience and in a spirit of penance for our sins; and these crosses which we must carry, even though we are unwilling, will become for us sources of consolation and merit, and will infallibly lead us to eternal happiness. For the royal way to heaven is the way of the cross. Amen.

## XIV. INSTRUCTION

### Fifth and Sixth Articles of the Creed

*He Descended into Hell; the Third Day He Rose Again from the Dead.—He Ascended into Heaven and Sitteth at the Right Hand of God the Father Almighty*

I. Our Divine Saviour, nailed to the tree of the cross, heaved a last sigh, and His soul separated from His body. But both soul and body remained united to the divinity, so that they were always the soul and the body of the Son of God, and, consequently, always equally worthy of our adoration and homage. The adorable body of Jesus Christ, after death, remained for a time suspended on the cross; and, in the interval, one of the soldiers pierced the heart of our Savior with a lance, in order to assure himself of His death, little thinking that thereby he had opened to us an inexhaustible source of consolation and grace. Finally, when evening came, Joseph of Arimathea, one of the disciples of Jesus, and at the same time one of the noblest and wealthiest of the Jews, went to see Pilate and boldly asked him for the permission to remove the body of our Lord, and to bury it. Pilate granted the permission and Joseph, together with Nicodemus, also one of the disciples of Christ, but secretly until now, for fear of the Jews, went to Mount Calvary and took down the sacred body from the cross, and having embalmed it they wrapped it in winding sheets and deposited it in a new sepulcher, where no one had yet been laid. They then closed the entrance with a large stone.

The chief priests and Pharisees, remembering that Jesus had said that He would rise again on the third day, and fearing that His disciples might steal the body in order to make the people believe that He had really risen, sealed the entrance of the sepulcher with the seals of the State, and stationed a troop of soldiers around the grave to guard it. Divine Providence disposed things in this manner in order that even the most inveterate enemies of the Saviour should become the chief witnesses of His resurrection.

II. Whilst the body of the Saviour lay in the sepulcher, what became of His soul? His soul, says the Apostles' Creed, always united with His divinity, descended into hell; that is, into a place generally called Limbo. But in order to understand what the Church teaches

hereby, we should know that there are three kinds of hells: The hell of the demons and of those souls who die in the state of mortal sin, and whose torments are eternal; the hell of the souls of those who died in a state of grace, but who had not yet entirely satisfied divine justice for their sins. The torments are like those of hell, but they last only for a time. We call this place Purgatory. Finally, Limbo, a place of peace and rest, free from all suffering, except the privation of the sight of God, and where those pure and holy souls were detained who had entirely satisfied for their sins, but who, having died before the coming of the Redeemer, could not enter heaven, because it was closed by original sin, and was to be opened to them only by the death of our Lord. Here were detained the souls of Adam and Eve, our first parents; of the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law, Job, Tobias, and many other holy personages whom we do not know. It was into this Limbo that our Lord descended, in order to announce to them the glad tidings of redemption. What must have been their joy when they learned that the day of their deliverance had finally arrived, and that they were to go forth and possess God forever in heaven!

III. It was the third day after the death of our Lord when the prediction that He had made repeatedly that He would "rise again on the third day" was fulfilled. On a Sunday, about six o'clock in the morning, a few pious and holy women had come to the tomb to embalm the body of the Savior with precious perfumes which they had brought with them. But they found there only an angel, under the form of a young man, who said to them: *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; he is risen, he is not here; behold the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him, as he told you* (Mark xvi. 6–7).

Such is the simple manner in which the Gospel relates the resurrection of the Saviour — this important mystery which forms the foundation of the Christian faith. I shall dwell little on this mystery in order to show its reality and certitude. Since the Gospel declares it, we are not permitted to have the least doubt about it. Besides, the body of our Lord having been deposited in a tomb, in the sight and to the knowledge of everybody, it must certainly either have risen, or His disciples must have stolen it, but how could they have stolen it, since the tomb was surrounded by a troop of soldiers charged to watch over

the body which it contained and to prevent it from being removed. On the other hand, did not our Saviour appear repeatedly after His resurrection to His apostles and his disciples, conversing with them, eating with them, and making them touch His body and wounds? Did He not even show Himself on one occasion to a multitude of five hundred persons gathered on a mountain?

But what should completely dispel any doubt that might exist in our minds is the effect which this miraculous event produced in the world. Hardly became it known, when Jews and Gentiles were converted in crowds, during three hundred years, and great numbers were not afraid to die for their faith in the resurrection. The atrocious persecutions which broke out against the disciples of the Crucified only helped to increase the number of converts, and soon the idols tumbled down, paganism was overcome, and the world became Christian. And what is still more astonishing, it has remained Christian. For nearly nineteen hundred years the Christian religion has flourished on earth, in spite of all the persecutions of the tyrants, in spite of all the attacks of the infidels and impious, and it is still full of vigor and life, and one can well understand that it has promises of immortality. If the resurrection of the Saviour had not been real, if it had been only a lie and a strategem skillfully conceived by His disciples, would the world have embraced the faith of Jesus Christ, and constantly remained faithful to it, and would Christians have defended and preserved the faith even at the price of life itself?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the strongest proof of the truth of faith and of the divinity of the Saviour. It is the basis of the whole edifice of Christianity. If Jesus Christ had not really risen again *our faith would be vain*, says St. Paul (I. Cor. xv. 14). His religion and Gospel would be only a fable, and He Himself (pardon me, O my God, for the impious supposition) would be only an impostor.

If Christ really rose from the dead, what is the consequence? It follows that He is God and that His religion is divine. Indeed, who but a God could foretell, as He did, that He would rise again, and that He would rise on the third day? This is the proof which He gave when the Jews asked Him for a sign of His divinity: *This evil and adulterous generation*, He said, *seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights, so shall the son of*

*man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights* (Matt. XII. 39–40).

The Church celebrates the great mystery of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. The feast of Easter is regarded as the greatest of all the feasts of the year. On this great day the Church displays her most beautiful ornaments, her most majestic ceremonial, and makes the arches resound with the chant of joy, *Alleluia*, praise the Lord! Oh! let us repeat, ourselves, this cry of glory and triumph, a triumph over the devil and over our passions, and a passage from death to life, from sin to grace. Hence, during the time of Lent let us prepare ourselves for our spiritual resurrection through mortification and penance. According to the example of our divine Master, we should commence by crucifying ourselves, by dying to ourselves and to all our passions, in order to begin a new life, a life of faith and charity, a life of zeal and fervor, and thus we shall rise with Jesus Christ, and more than this, we shall rise like Jesus Christ. The body of Jesus Christ after His resurrection became so agile and subtile, that it could easily penetrate the hardest substances, as in the Cenacle, and transport itself from one place to another, with the rapidity of thought. Once risen to the life of grace, we should work out our salvation with so much activity and zeal, that no obstacles should stop us in the ways of God. Finally, as the risen body of Christ became brilliant with glory and light, as formerly on Mount Thabor, so, also, after our resurrection from sin, we should strive to spread everywhere the light of our good example, to give a new brightness to our actions, even to the most common, through pure and upright, intentions, and to gain souls to God through the good odor of our virtues.

IV. Although Jesus Christ had consummated by His death the work of our redemption, He did not, however, wish to ascend into heaven immediately after His resurrection. His disciples needed to be prepared for the separation, which should be so hard for them; they were also in need of instruction on many points, and even, perhaps, of being confirmed in the faith of His resurrection. For this purpose Jesus remained forty days upon earth, conversing familiarly with them, giving them all the necessary instructions, either on the mysteries of faith which they were to preach, or on the government of His Church, the sacraments and the manner of administering them. It was in this interval that He gave to St. Peter the keys of His Church, and that He established him as its chief; that He charged the

apostles to carry the Gospel throughout the world, that He gave to them the understanding of the Scriptures, and that He manifested to them other truths which the Church has always preserved and respected as the word of God, and which form what we call the apostolic traditions.

Finally, the day which the Saviour had chosen to ascend into heaven having arrived, He entered suddenly into the house at Jerusalem, where He had given orders to His apostles to assemble. He saluted them friendly, wished and gave to them peace, ate with them, and reminded them of all He had taught them. Then having told them that He would send them the Holy Ghost, who would transform them into new men, He led them up the Mount of Olives; and, there, after having blessed them for the last time, He arose majestically into the air; a brilliant cloud soon hid Him from their eyes while they were still looking up; the gates of heaven were opened, and as a king who returns from conquering a kingdom, Jesus made His triumphant entry into heaven amidst the acclamations of the heavenly court, accompanied by all the holy souls of Limbo.

The Church honors this mystery every year on Ascension Day, forty days after Easter. The ascension of the Saviour of the world was a wonderful act of His almighty power; for it was He Himself who, by His own power and without any assistance, raised Himself into heaven. Hence, there is a difference between the ascension of Jesus Christ and the assumption of the Blessed Virgin, who was transported thither not by her own power, but by the hands of angels.

Although Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, He is, nevertheless, always present upon earth. He is sacramentally present in all the Catholic Churches of the world, and spiritually with His Church which He has always assisted, and which He always will assist until the end of time, with His divine light.

But what does the Creed wish to teach us when it says that Jesus Christ in heaven sits at the *right hand of God the Father?* Has the heavenly Father a right hand, or a left hand? No, undoubtedly, because He is a spirit. Can Jesus Christ Himself, in His glorified state, be considered as sitting or standing? No, because He partakes in the nature of the spirits. What, therefore, do the apostles mean to say? They mean to tell us that Jesus Christ in heaven is as in a place of rest; that He occupies near God the most distinguished place;

that He is above the angels and saints, being in all things equal to His Father.

This article of the Creed naturally suggests some interesting questions. Why did Jesus Christ ascend into heaven? What does He do there? What are the advantages which we will derive from His ascension?

Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, my brethren: 1st. Because He had not come upon earth to remain here always; the object of His mission having been fulfilled, He returned to His Father who had sent Him. 2d. To confound the carnal Jews, and to show them that His kingdom was not of this world. 3d. To glorify His humanity which had been so humiliated upon earth. 4th. To send the Holy Ghost to His apostles, according to His promise: *For if I go not the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you* (John XVII. 7). 5th. Finally, in order to prepare a place for us.

What does Jesus do in heaven? Although He is in everything equal to His Father, He continues to perform there for us, as formerly upon earth, the offices of advocate, of priest, and of mediator; of advocate, by interceding continually for us; of priest, by immolating Himself continually for us in a mystical manner; and of mediator, by applying to us the merits of His precious blood.

What are the advantages we derive from the ascension of Jesus Christ? One is that it depends only upon ourselves to ascend into heaven after Him. There where the head is, the members should also be. The gates being opened to us, why should we not enter? I admit that there are obstacles; our passions are strong; the devil tempts us, and the world is around us with all its pomps and pleasures. But is it not worth the pain to make some efforts and to impose upon ourselves even the most painful sacrifices, when there is question of gaining an eternity of happiness, and of a happiness such as it is not even possible, here below, to form an idea? After all what must we do to gain heaven? One single thing: to think often about it; for it is impossible to think often and seriously about it without feeling ourselves penetrated with zeal, ardor, and invincible courage. What are, indeed, all the joys and all the pleasures of this world, in comparison with that boundless ocean of joy and happiness! *My son, I conjure thee, look up to heaven*, said the mother of the Machabees, to the last of her children, when exhorting him to martyrdom (II. Mach. VII. 28). I say the same to you, my brethren, to you all, in whatever

position you may find yourselves; in sorrow or in joy, in temptation or in calm; look up to heaven, think of heaven, meditate on the happiness of heaven; *Sursum corda;* and this thought will sustain you, this thought will encourage you, this thought will make you triumph over all obstacles, and will lead you to the happiness of heaven. Amen.

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## XV. INSTRUCTION

### Seventh Article of the Creed

*From Thence He Shall Come to Judge the Living and the Dead*

It is an article of the faith, my brethren, that we all shall be judged at the hour of death. At the moment our soul is separated from the body, it shall appear before the supreme Judge, who will demand an account of all its thoughts, words, and actions, and in the same instant we shall be rewarded or punished according as we have deserved. This particular judgment will be an irrevocable judgment and without appeal, because it will be pronounced by a judge infinitely knowing and incorruptible, who has seen all, heard all, and whose sentences are as unchangeable as God Himself.

And besides this particular judgment, which takes place between God and the soul of each one, there will be another judgment, where all men, either in heaven, in purgatory, or in hell, shall appear. This judgment will be held by Jesus Christ Himself, appearing in all His glory and majesty, surrounded by the heavenly court; but this public and solemn judgment will take place at the end of the world.

The Apostles' Creed teaches this when it says that the Saviour will come down from heaven to judge *the living and the dead.* He will come to judge the *living*, that is, those who shall be living at the end of the world, or, according to another less literal interpretation, those who have died in the state of grace; He will judge the *dead*, that is, those who have died before the last day, or those who have died in a state of mortal sin and are dead to grace.

Oh! how different will be this second coming of the Son of God from the first! In the first, Jesus appeared in the poorest and humblest

state one can imagine; but in His second coming He will judge all men, and will judge them with such pomp and grandeur that, as Scripture says, *the powers of heaven shall be moved* (Matt. xxiv. 29); and every one shall confess Him to be the Master of the universe.

Undoubtedly, my brethren, the General Judgment at the end of the world will be only a solemn ratification of the first, which was rendered at the hour of death. Nevertheless, it is necessary that it should take place, and why? For three reasons: 1st. That justice may be rendered to everybody. There are upon earth sinners who are venerated as saints, and saints who are despised as sinners. Is it not just that the hypocrisy of the one and the innocence of the other should be unveiled before all men? 2d. How many crimes and how many virtues there are which will have their full consummation only at the end of the world, the virtues of an apostle, for instance, or the crimes of a heresiarch, and which, consequently, can be punished or rewarded only then in their just proportion! 3d. Finally, on seeing so many wicked persons in prosperity and happiness, whilst so many holy souls are sighing in want and misery, we are often tempted to accuse the Providence of God. Why should there not be a day when the divine wisdom will show itself in its full glory and splendor, and where all shall learn that if God sometimes seems to punish or to reward wrongfully here below, it is only to show more clearly His rewards or punishments in eternity?

Let us meditate to-day, my brethren, on this fearful truth, and let us review what revelation teaches us, either about the signs preceding this judgment, or about the events that will accompany it, or about the terrible sentence that will follow it.

II. And, first, what are the signs that will precede the Last Judgment? The Gospel thus names them: 1st. There shall be a great weakness of faith, so great that the Son of Man will hardly find believers on earth. The Sacraments shall be abandoned, the Sundays profaned, the churches deserted, luxury and debauchery at their height. This will be the beginning of the end. 2d. The coming of the Anti-Christ, a powerful and impious man who will try to make himself adored as a God, or a monster who, in his infernal hatred against religion, will do all in his power to complete the corruption of men. Persecutions against the Church and against Christ will be so violent that, from the beginning of the world, nothing like it will have been seen. The maxims and doctrines of the

Anti-Christ will, nevertheless, be so captious, and he will do such wonderful things and work such prodigies, that the elect themselves would be seduced if God did not send Elias and Enoch to confirm them: *For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive, if possible, even the elect* (Matt. xxiv. 24). Let us pray, my brethren, that the Lord may not reserve us for this time of seduction and scandal. 3d. There shall be wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes which will ravage and overthrow all the world. Battlefields will flow with blood; and the famines will be so frightful that mothers will kill their own children and eat their flesh. 4th. Whilst the earth shall be in mourning and consternation, there shall be still more frightful signs in heaven. The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall cover itself with a bloody veil, the stars shall fall from the sky; in a word, all the celestial powers shall be in confusion and disorder. 5th. Finally, when the last moment shall have arrived, God shall wrap the entire world in flames which will consume all in an instant; and, the world having been thus destroyed by fire, He shall send His angels to call all men before His judgment seat. "Go," He will tell them, "ministers of my glory, sound your trumpet to the four corners of the earth and to the bottom of the abysses, and announce to all that sleep in the dust that the hour of judgment is come." And at the same moment the angels shall go to the four corners of the earth, and shall sound their trumpets, crying out: *Arise, ye dead, and come to the judgment!* And immediately the graves shall open, and the earth and the sea shall give forth the bodies that sleep in their bosom since the beginning of time; and the souls descended from heaven or delivered from the flames of purgatory or come forth from hell, shall be reunited with their bodies; and thus reunited in soul and body all men shall be assembled before the Sovereign Judge in the valley of Josaphat.

Oh! how terrible shall be those last days, my brethren! How can we think of them without being seized with fright and terror? You, especially, sinners that listen to me here, do you think of them, do you believe in them? But let us continue, for this is only the beginning of the great day of divine justice.

III. When all men, obedient to the voice of the angels, shall be assembled for this solemn judgment, the cross of Jesus will appear in the sky more brilliant than the sun, and Jesus Himself, accompanied by the entire celestial court and surrounded with glory and majesty,

will come and sit on His throne in the midst of that numberless crowd awaiting the judgment which shall settle their lot forever. He will begin by commanding the angels to separate the good from the bad, as a shepherd separates the goats from the sheep, placing the good at His right hand and the wicked at His left, according as the glorious or frightful appearance of their bodies shall signify whether they are of the number of the elect or of the damned; and then Jesus will proceed with the judgment. And here, my brethren, you must not imagine that the discussion will be a long one. Jesus needs only to open the book of life and death in which are inscribed, day by day, and hour by hour, all our actions, all our words, and even all our thoughts, good and bad. He will lay this great book before our eyes, and there we shall see, in an instant, all the evil we have done and all the good we omitted. This book will be like a vast looking-glass in which the Son of Justice will show us, *in a twinkling of an eye* (I. Cor. xv. 52), all our vices and all our virtues. And, besides, we shall read not only our own sins, but we shall read therein, also, those of others; you shall see mine, as I shall see yours; parents shall see the sins of their children, and children shall see the sins of their parents; we shall see the sins of all men: *Liber scriptus proferetur, in quo totum continetur unde mundus judicetur.* What confusion for those hypocrites who had taken such great care to hide their shame and their sins, even from the ears of a charitable confessor. In this book of life, which will be written in fiery letters, we shall see all that has not been effaced through penance; all, even the most secret thoughts and affections: *For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed* (Matt. x. 26); all, even the evil which we ourselves have not committed, but which we caused others to commit, or which we did not hinder them from committing when we could have done so; all, even the good which we should have done and which we omitted to do, or which we did badly.

What a severe account we shall have to render at this last day! Do you think of this, you sinners, who live for so long a time in the filth of vice? Do you think of this, you lukewarm and indifferent souls, who do nothing, absolutely nothing, for heaven? Perhaps we might feel assured, if on that day we could find some one to take up our defense. But what shall we say before a Judge who has seen and heard everything, and what excuse can we give for the crimes we have committed by desire?

My brethren, it will not be with God's tribunal as with the tribunals of men. There will be no need of any accuser, of any witness; our own conscience shall be the accuser, and crushed under the weight of evidence, we shall be the first to condemn ourselves.

IV. The sins of all men being revealed before the whole world, the Sovereign Judge will rise from His throne, and turning to those at His right, will say to them in a tone of ineffable goodness: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, come, my friends; you have carried my cross upon this earth of exile and pilgrimage long enough; come and possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matt. xxv. 34). You holy apostles, illustrious martyrs, zealous confessors, pure virgins, come and enjoy the reward which you have merited by your virtues. Then turning to those at His left, He will say to them with a voice full of indignation and wrath: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire* (Matt. xxv. 41). You have denied My authority, you have trodden under foot My commandments, you have abused My graces. It was in vain that I came upon earth to show you the way of salvation; it was in vain that I sent you zealous ministers to remind you of your duties; it was in vain that I furnished to you all the possible means to come to Me. You have despised all, you wished to listen only to your passions, even at the hour of death you remained plunged in a guilty indifference, or you have even continued to hate and to blaspheme Me. Depart from Me, you cursed, to receive in hell the just punishment of your crimes.

And, at the same time, the elect of the Lord, shall rise with Him into heaven to enjoy forever its ineffable delights; and the wicked shall fall into the eternal abyss of hell, never more to leave it.

V. This, my brethren, according to the Scripture is what will pass on the great day of judgment. These are the circumstances attending the second coming of Jesus Christ upon earth; day of wrath and of vengeance for sinners, but day of joy and triumph for the just,—terrible and frightful day for the one, day of unspeakable consolation for the other! When shall this great day come? Ah! my brethren, we do not know, because Jesus was not pleased to make it known to us, but it is certain that it will come and that it will come, perhaps, even sooner than we think. At least, when we see so little faith upon earth to-day, when we see the disorders and unheard scandals of every day, the persecution of the Church, the overthrow of empires and kingdoms, the bloody wars which tear nations asunder, the

subversive doctrines which undermine society, and hear the rumbling of that storm which threatens to sweep away all society, we might be tempted to believe that we are even now near the end of the world.

However this may be, the end of the world arrives every day for many; death may surprise us at any moment, and our deathbed will be the first tribunal where we shall be judged. Suppose that this judgment should take place for us at the present hour, would we be prepared to undergo it? On what side would our conscience place us at this moment? Would it be on the right, or on the left? Ah! the judgment of God is so severe and so dreadful; if we have to render an account of everything, even of an idle word; if, according to the language of faith, the great Judge sees spots even in the sun; if He judges even justice itself, what have we not to fear, we miserable sinners, who swallow iniquity like water, and whose crimes surpass, perhaps, the number of hairs on our heads! Let us tremble at the thought of this judgment. The greatest saints have done this. St. Jerome tells us that he always seemed to hear the trumpet calling the dead from their graves. St. Gregory of Nazianzen and St. Chrysostom often shed tears in thinking of the last day. St. Agathon, shortly before his death, passed three days immovable with fright and stupor; and when he was asked, after having recovered his senses, why he was so much afraid, "Ah!" he said, "I have assisted at the judgment of God, and oh, how different are his judgments from those of men!" Let us think often of the last judgment, my brethren! Let us prepare for it, and for this purpose let us commence by judging ourselves severely, and by placing ourselves now in the state in which we should like to be found at death.

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## XVI. INSTRUCTION

### Eighth Article of the Creed

*I Believe in the Holy Ghost*

In this instruction we have three things to explain: what the Holy Ghost is in Himself, what He is with regard to us, what we should do in order to draw Him down upon us and to preserve

Him in our souls. Important subjects which will demand our full attention.

I. Faith teaches that there is a Holy Ghost. The Holy Scriptures make mention thereof, so to say, on every page. He it was, according to the account of Moses, who in the days of creation moved over the waters and covered them, in some sort, by His shadow, in order to give them fruitfulness; it was He who spoke with the ancient patriarchs Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and led and upheld their steps in the painful exile of this life; through His inspiration Moses and all the great men who came after him governed the people of God with so much wisdom; it was under His dictation that all the prophets wrote.

On opening the New Testament, we read that it was the Holy Ghost who formed the body of Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary; that he descended in the form of a dove upon our divine Savior at His baptism, and upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost. Our Lord often spoke of Him, and promised to send Him upon earth, in order not to leave His apostles orphans, after His own ascension into heaven.

The existence of the Holy Ghost is, therefore, an incontestible truth, and the apostles have inserted it in the Creed as one of the fundamental truths which we must believe: *I believe in the Holy Ghost.*

But who is the Holy Ghost? He is the third person of the Holy Trinity, truly existing, and really distinct from the Father and the Son. By the word person we understand an individual substance which wills, speaks, acts, thinks, and reasons. Now, do we not see in the sacred books that the Holy Ghost is endowed with intelligence and will, that He speaks, enlightens, teaches, and that He is even the principle and the source of all light, of all consolation, and of all truth? Do not those words, alone, of our Lord to His disciples, on the point of leaving them: *My Father will send you another Paraclete* (John xvi. 16), point out a person, a Consoler really distinct from the Son, who announces Him, and from the Father, who is to send Him?

The Holy Ghost is, therefore, really a divine person, and not a simple attribute of the divinity, as certain heretics have pretended; and this person is really distinct from the Father and the Son, as these latter are distinct from each other.

The Holy Ghost is God like the Father and the Son; this has been the constant belief of the Church. He partakes of all the perfections of both Father and Son. The Father and Son are eternal, and the Holy Ghost is also eternal. The Father and Son are almighty, it is the same with the Holy Ghost. There is nothing unequal, nothing inferior in these three adorable persons. All three are equally infinite in perfections, in elevation, and in authority. When we call the Holy Ghost the third person, it is only on account of His origin, as we will explain further on. This is why we render to the Holy Ghost the same homage and adoration that we pay to the Father and the Son: *Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* The reason is, that these three persons, although distinct from one another, form, nevertheless, one and the same God, because all three have together one and the same divinity. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, but they are always one and the same God. *There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost* (John v. 7).

As we have explained, my brethren, in speaking of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father begot His Son in contemplating Himself, and the Father and the Son produced the Holy Ghost in loving each other; so that the Holy Ghost is nothing but the consubstantial love of the Father and the Son, just as the Son is nothing but the Word, the thought or consubstantial contemplation of the Father. And this is what constitutes the most essential difference between the three adorable persons; for the Father who begets is not begotten, the Son who is begotten does not beget, and the Holy Ghost who is not begotten, but who is produced, does neither beget nor produce. Great and sublime truths! We cannot, undoubtedly, comprehend them, for God, alone, can comprehend Himself, but we must believe them such, because God has so revealed to us.

II. What are the graces which the Holy Ghost brings to our souls? The Catechism tells us that He sanctifies us, and makes us live a spiritual life; two wonderful effects, two wonderful operations, which it is important for us to understand.

1st. The Holy Ghost *sanctifies* us, and how? By purifying us from our sins, and by implanting in our hearts that charity which renders us agreeable to God. He purifies us from our sins first by the holy inspirations and by the graces of conversion and of salvation which He grants us; secondly, by the Sacraments to which the remission of

sins is attached, such as baptism and penance; third, by rooting out from our hearts the inclinations of our corrupt nature, and by establishing in them the opposite virtues. When the heart is thus free from the bonds of sin, from all affection for sin, the Holy Ghost enriches it with His most beautiful and magnificent gift, sanctifying grace. This grace clothes our souls with a ravishing beauty and renders them agreeable to God, and gives them a right to the celestial inheritance. By it the Holy Ghost comes to reside in us, to establish His kingdom in our hearts, and to pour out His gifts on us. It is thus that the Holy Ghost sanctifies us, and that is the reason why He is called the *Spirit of Sanctification*. It is from Him that all holiness and all virtue derive their source; it was He who made the martyrs, the confessors, and the virgins. If there are still upon earth holy souls who, by their piety and good works, preserve the world from the scourges of the celestial wrath, it is only through the grace of coöperation of the Holy Ghost.

2d. Not only does the Holy Ghost sanctify us, but *He makes us live a spiritual life*, and maintains us in virtue through the graces He grants us. These graces, or special favors, we call the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They are seven in number, namely: The *gift of wisdom*, which makes us prefer God and the things of God; the gift of *intelligence*, which makes us know and believe the truths of salvation; the gift of *counsel*, which shows us the way to heaven, and guides us in our progress; the gift of *science*, which teaches us to distinguish good from evil, and gives correct ideas of the grandeur of God; the gift of *strength*, which fills us with courage and energy to resist sin and to overcome the obstacles which stand in the way of our salvation; the gift of *piety*, which moves us to fulfill cheerfully and with a religious spirit, our duties towards God, towards our neighbor, and towards ourselves; and, finally, the gift of *fear*, which imprints in our souls a great respect for God's majesty and a holy fear of His judgments.

III. These were the wonderful gifts which the apostles received in so brilliant and striking a manner on the day of Pentecost. The Acts of the Apostles have preserved to us the account of this remarkable event. It was on the tenth day when the Apostles had been shut up in the Cenacle, with the Blessed Virgin and the disciples, according to the order the Lord had given them, that suddenly a great noise was heard, like that of a violent wind, which filled the whole

house, and they saw fiery tongues which divided themselves and sat on each of them. This violent wind was a token of the presence of the Deity, as it had mainfested itself on Mount Sinai, amid thunder and lightning. The fiery tongues symbolized the effects which the Holy Ghost should produce in the Apostles; for the Holy Ghost is like a luminous and ardent fire that enlightens the spirit and enkindles the heart.

Indeed, the apostles had hardly received the Holy Ghost under the different emblems, when they began to speak in many languages, so that the various peoples assembled on this day at Jerusalem from all parts of the world to celebrate the Pentecost, understood them perfectly, and in their astonishment cried out: *Behold, are not all these that speak, Galileans? And how have we heard every man our own tongue wherein we are born?* (Acts II. 7, 8, 12.)

The gift of tongues was not the only effect which the Holy Ghost produced in the Apostles. Until now they had been so simple and ignorant, that they could not understand the doctrine of their Divine Master. But hardly had they been enlightened by the Holy Ghost, when they found themselves enriched with the most sublime knowledge, and instructed in the most profound mysteries. In an instant they had learned infinitely more than the philosophers and the learned men of antiquity had during centuries. And this was not all. On that memorable day the Holy Ghost filled them with such strength and courage that, whilst before even St. Peter was so weak and timid that he trembled at the voice of a servant, henceforth nothing could hinder them from proclaiming their faith everywhere, even before the most cruel tyrants; and in spite of threats and the fear of the most terrible torments, they preached Jesus crucified.

IV. The Holy Ghost produces these wonderful effects in us as in the apostles, if we are well disposed to receive Him; not, indeed, with the same brilliancy and the same abundance, because we have not the same mission to fulfill, but in each according to the measure of his wants.

Is it necessary to tell you what need we all have of the assistance and gifts of the Holy Ghost? Without Him we would be nothing but ignorance and corruption. Without His lights we would not know what God is, and what we ourselves are, or what will become of us. We would not know the truths we should believe, and the duties we should practice. Without the help of His grace, inclined

to evil as we are, we could neither avoid sin, nor efface it from our soul, if we had the misfortune to commit it. We could not even have a thought meritorious for salvation. But what should we do to draw down upon us this divine Spirit? Three things are necessary: The first is to be *recollected*. The Holy Ghost never communicates with souls that live in noise and dissipation: *The Lord is not in the wind* (III. Ki. xix. 11). This is why the Apostles, when they wished to prepare themselves to receive Him, retired into the Cenacle, where they remained shut up during ten days. It is for this reason that every day we see pious souls separating themselves from the world, burying themselves in retreat in order to occupy themselves solely with God and with their salvation. Undoubtedly, these are examples which you cannot generally imitate in your state of life. But if you cannot leave the world, can you not, at least, avoid its distracting entertainments? Can you not, from time to time, forget your affairs and your pursuits? Can you not at times separate yourselves from the world in spirit and heart?

The second disposition is *prayer*. Although the Holy Ghost knows our miseries and needs, He wants us to confide them to Him; such is the order of Providence, and God ordinarily grants His graces only to those that ask for them. Look at the Apostles in the Cenacle! What prayers, what sighs to draw down upon them the divine spirit who should be to them a father, a master, a liberator, and protector; who should enlighten them, and give them all the strength necessary to fulfill the mission with which they were charged! My brethren, every time you stand in need of particular graces, for example, in preparation for the Sacraments, or in the choice of a state of life, and in many other circumstances, pray to the Holy Ghost to come down in your souls, in order to enlighten you and to strengthen you. Remember that prayer is ordinarily the necessary condition to draw down upon us the Holy Ghost. The prayers "Come, Holy Ghost," and that which begins "Come, Holy Spirit" are excellent formulas which we would do well to recite often, and which good Christians never forget to address to God to implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit in all their necessities.

The third disposition is *purity of soul*. All your prayers and all your efforts would be useless, if, at the same time, you did not try to purify your hearts from all that could raise any obstacle to the working of the Holy Ghost. The great obstacle which He meets

in our hearts, is the affection for mortal sin. How can this Spirit, who is holiness itself, dwell in a soul where the devil reigns, where pride, hatred, or profanity hold full sway? *No, no*, says the Lord, *My spirit shall not remain in carnal man* (Gen. vi. 3). The Holy Ghost is that chaste dove, prefigured by the dove of the Deluge, which never puts its foot in the mire, that is, in souls filled with corruption. It is true that the Holy Spirit purifies us from our sins, but this spirit of grace cannot purify us from our sins, if we do not ardently desire it. We must, therefore, see what the state of our soul is, to what vices it is subject, and try to expiate our faults by a good and sincere penance. If our dispositions are good, and our resolutions firm, and if we sincerely desire to correct ourselves, the Holy Ghost will come to our assistance, and will complete the work which we have commenced with the help of grace. Let us render to the Holy Ghost the homage that is due to Him, let us implore Him for the graces we need, let us thank Him for those He has granted us, and let us be careful to make a good use of them. Amen.

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## XVII. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed

*I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church. The Communion of Saints*

The word *Church* signifies a reunion, an assembly, a society. It is used, also, for the place where the assemblies of the faithful are held. Thus, this house in which we are now gathered is called a church. But in the ninth article of the Creed, in which we make profession to believe in the *Holy Catholic Church*, the word *church* signifies the society of all the faithful, spread all over the world, and of which Jesus Christ is the invisible head, and the Pope the visible head.

Several instructions will be necessary in order to explain all the subjects that belong to this ninth article. To-day I will limit myself to explaining the nature and the constitution of the Church.

I. The Church, we say, is *the society of the faithful of which Jesus Christ is the invisible head, and the Pope the visible head.*

We call the head of a society the one who leads and directs it. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church because He is its founder, preserver, and sanctifier. He is the *invisible head*, because, since His ascension, He is no longer visibly present upon earth, but watches over His Church from the right hand of His Father in heaven, and governs and preserves her though the light and the unction of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord Himself taught us this when He said that He was *the vine, and that we are the branches* (John xv. 5). For, says St. Augustine, just as the vine and the branches form only one tree, and as the branches draw their life and strength from the vine which communicates it to them, so, also, we form only one with Jesus Christ who is our head, and from whom flows all justification, as from an inexhaustible source.

However, our Saviour, by ascending into heaven, did not leave the Church, His spouse, in widowhood; for, besides being always with her, although in an invisible manner, through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, He has given to it a *visible* head who holds His place, and who acts in His name and with the same powers. This head was St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, to whom Christ gave the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whom He charged to feed both the lambs and the sheep, that is, the pastors and the faithful, or the entire Church; and to-day it is our Holy Father, the Pope, who is the successor of St. Peter.

II. But who are the members of the Church and what are the necessary conditions of membership?

The members of the Church are those who have been made Christians through baptism, and who profess the religion of Jesus Christ. All the faithful are Christians, but all Christians are not the faithful. To be of the number of the faithful, four things are necessary: baptism, the profession of the true faith, the partaking of the same Sacraments, and submission to the legitimate pastors.

1. *Baptism is necessary;* for we must be children of God before becoming children of the Church. It follows that Jews, pagans, and infidels are not of the number of the faithful, no more than the children who, though born of Christian parents, are not baptized.

2. *We must profess the true faith*, that which God has revealed to us, and which is the only faith worthy of our respect and homage. We profess the faith when we believe all the truths which it teaches, and when one is subject to all that it commands.

To believe none of the truths of faith, is to be an infidel; to believe only some, is to be a heretic; and when a person remains obstinate in his errors, or manifests them exteriorly, he is anathematized or excommunicated by the Church. And a person once excommunicated is no longer counted among the faithful; he belongs no longer to the Church; he is outside her pale. Such are, in our days, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Anabaptists, the Anglicans, and the Jansenists. All have received baptism; but as they continue to remain obstinate and to deny truths which the Church has formally defined, they are driven from her bosom, and she does not acknowledge them any longer as her children.

As to those, who, though believing all the truths of faith, do not practice its precepts, they can be compared to dead branches. They belong, indeed, to the body of the Church through such exterior ties as attendance at the divine service and partaking of the Sacraments; but they do not belong to the soul of the Church, because they have no part in her spiritual and interior goods.

3. *We must partake of the same sacraments*, or at least not be deprived by the Church of the right to receive them. To understand this point, you must know that there are crimes so enormous that the Church could not, without danger, tolerate those who commit them. Either to prevent the contagion of bad example, or to bring back the sinner to better sentiments, she cuts him off from the number of her children, as the father who would chase from his house an unnatural son, who refuses to obey him; or as the surgeon who would cut off a gangrenous member, for fear that the disease might communicate itself to the rest of the body. The apostle St. Paul pursued this course in regard to the incestuous Corinthian, and this is what we call the penalty of excommunication. As long as a Christian is under this censure, he cannot be admitted to the Sacraments, nor assist at divine service. Moreover, he is deprived of the prayers and suffrages of the Church, of the indulgences, of the prayers for the dead, and, finally, of Christian burial when he dies.

4. *We must be subject to our lawful pastors.* The legitimate pastors are the rectors in their parishes, the bishops in their dioceses, and our holy Father in the whole Church. When Jesus Christ founded His Church, He established different classes of pastors, who did not all receive an equal degree of power. There were the seventy-two disciples, who were associated to the apostles for the exercise of the

holy ministry. The bishops are the successors of the apostles, and our Holy Father, the Pope, is the successor of St. Peter. The duty of the priests is to preach, to instruct, and to govern the parishes entrusted to them, but they are pastors only of the second order and are subject to the inspection and authority of the bishops. The duty of the bishops is to instruct and to govern their dioceses; but their authority is necessarily subject to that of our Holy Father, the Pope, who governs the whole Church. Consequently, not to obey one's parish priest would be to disobey the bishop; and not to obey the bishop, would be to disobey the Sovereign Pontiff, or rather, Jesus Christ Himself, whom he represents, and who has said, even in speaking to His ministers, that *to hear them, is to hear Him, and to despise them, is to despise Him* (Luke x. 16).

Our lawful pastors are, therefore, the parish priests, the bishops, and our Holy Father the Pope. These pastors are called lawful, in order to distinguish them from those false pastors who, without any divine mission, intrude themselves into the ministry of the Church, as, for instance, those constitutional bishops and priests, in the time of the great French Revolution of 1793, or who, after having been duly ordained and appointed, cease to be lawful, because by their errors and their insubordination they cease to be in communion with the Church. It is for this reason that the Russian and Greek Churches no longer form part of the true Church; they refuse to acknowledge the Pope as their head.

III. Such are, my brethren, the conditions necessary for one to be reckoned among the number of the faithful. We could, also, simply say that to be members of the Church we must be baptized and profess the true faith which Christ taught. But how can we know the true religion which Christ taught? We can know it by certain divine characteristics which are found in no other religion. These characteristics are the fulfillment of the prophecies in regard to its establishment and duration and in regard to the life and death of its founder, the miracles which God wrought to confirm it, and the holiness of the doctrine and morals it teaches. It is my intention to devote a special instruction to an explanation of these different proofs of the Catholic religion. As we live in a time when ignorance of religious truth is quite common, and when on account of this ignorance impiety makes such rapid progress, and public attacks are made against religion, its dogmas, and its practices, it would be well to enlighten your faith

about this point. To-day I shall limit myself to one subject, and briefly show you the necessity of religion. This will serve as a preamble to what I shall explain to you later on.

Must there be a religion, that is, a worship which imposes belief upon us and prescribes duties towards God, towards our neighbor, and towards ourselves?

Yes, my brethren, there must be a religion, as there must be a God—a God infinitely great, wise, and perfect, the creator of all things and of man in particular. He could not have created man for any other purpose than to be revered and glorified by him; for what other reason worthy of God could He have given man a soul so intelligent, and a heart so susceptible of gratitude and love? But since God has created man for His own service and glory, should He not have revealed to him at the same time the manner of rendering this homage to Him? Should He not have given him commandments? And should He not have sanctioned these laws by punishments and rewards? All this God did; and this worship, these laws, these dogmas of a future life, constitute what we call religion. This religion was necessary in order that we might render to God the homage we owe Him, and it was indispensable that this religion should be revealed by God, because without a divine revelation, we could never have been certain either of the dogmas, or the precepts, or the religious practices. We would have been exposed to all kinds of superstitions and errors, as was the case with all those nations that did not take faith for guide, but who preferred to follow only the light of their own erring reason. But religion was not only necessary in order that God might be served and adored as He ought to be; it was necessary, also, to man, in order to subdue his passions, and to check the disorders to which he might abandon himself. Indeed, my brethren, if there were no religion, if there were no heaven, no hell, what could keep man to his duty? What could hinder him from following the course of cupidity, of pride, of intemperance, and debauchery? Would human justice be able to check the passions of man? It might prevent public crimes to some extent, but what would secret crimes have to fear? Would natural reason be a safeguard? But reason often confounds itself with passion, and finds a hundred excuses even for the most guilty excesses. No, believe me, without religion there would be no justice, no charity, no shame in the world. Without religion there would be no respect for property,

no more generosity between enemies, no more security for life, no more fidelity in marriage. Take away religion, and society would become impossible; the earth would become the abode of savages, and man would become worse than the brute. The great French Revolution was a sad proof of all this. Priests were put to death, the churches were locked up, and the worship of God was replaced by the homage paid to the goddess of reason, and what was the result? Ah! read history, read about those times of terror when neither life nor property was secure, when guillotines were erected everywhere, when the prisons were filled with innocent victims, when vice raised its head, and virtue was obliged to hide itself!

Yes, my brethren, religion is indispensable, and when I say religion, I mean the true religion revealed by God, the religion that came from heaven and not those religions of human institution which can have no other foundation but hypocrisy or sophism, and no other support but the sword.

Among all the religions that lay claim to the empire of souls, which is the true one to which we owe submission and respect? This will form the subject of our next instruction

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## XVIII. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Church*

No long explanation is needed to establish the fact that there can be only one true religion, just as there is and can be only one God. In fact, what is religion? It is the way to go to God. Now, we can go to God only by truth. But can truth be found at one and the same time in contradictory religions? One religion teaches that there is only one God; another teaches that there are several gods. One church teaches that Jesus Christ is really present in the Blessed Sacrament; another denies it. One teaches that Mohammed was really a prophet sent from heaven · another maintains that he was an infamous impostor.

Surely the truth cannot be found on both sides at the same time. There can be but one true religion, and it remains for us to find which is the true one. It is evidently the Christian religion, the religion which Jesus Christ has taught us. Because the Christian religion alone bears unmistakably the marks of divinity. What are these marks? They are the prophecies which have announced its establishment, the different circumstances of the life and death of Jesus Christ, the miracles wrought in its favor, and finally the holiness of its doctrine and morals.

I. Prophecies.— To God alone belongs the power of foretelling the future, at least with regard to the things that have no relation to the ordinary and unchangeable laws of nature. Now, the Christian religion was announced long before its establishment by prophecies, whose authenticity cannot be denied, because they have been transmitted to us by the Jews themselves, of whom a great number have remained the irreconcilable enemies of our religion; and by prophecies so clear and so evident that they might be considered rather as the history of the past than as the prediction of future things. Thus, the time when the Redeemer should come upon earth, the place where He should be born, His mission, His prodigies, the circumstances of His life and death, His resurrection, His burial, His ascension into heaven — all these events had been literally foretold several centuries before they took place, and they were fulfilled with such an exactitude, that many Jews and pagans found no difficulty in acknowledging Jesus Christ to be the promised Messiah.

Among all these prophecies, there is especially one which merits our attention, because we are still the witness of its fulfillment; it is that which concerns the Jewish people. The prophet Daniel had foretold about seven hundred years before the coming of Christ, that when the Redeemer should have come and have been put to death by the Jews, this race would be dispersed, their temple destroyed, its sacrifices abolished, and the desolation would last until the end of time. Read the history of the Jewish people, and you will see that since the infamous crime of deicide, they find themselves without any government, without priests, without a temple, without a sacrifice, condemned to wander in the different parts of the world, hated and despised by all the nations of the earth, and without hope of ever recovering their ancient splendor. This singular dispersion and this strange punishment of the Jewish people, has been a spectacle of

God's wrath for nineteen centuries, as we see it to-day before our eyes. It is an eternal announcement of the heavenly vengeance, and a striking proof of the divinity of the Christian religion.

II. Miracles.— We cannot reasonably doubt that God often manifested by means of prodigies the divinity of our religion. In the Old and New Testament, in the history of the Church, and in the lives of the saints, we find the record of miracles of every kind wrought at all times in favor of the Christian religion: the sick healed in an instant, the blind recovering their sight, devil-possessed persons delivered, the dead raised to life again, and storms calmed. These miracles were not all wrought in one single place or in secret, but in all parts of the world, and before a multitude of witnesses, who were ready to testify to them at the price of their lives. Neither did these miracles take place by chance and without motive, but at the prayer of those who demanded some favor from heaven, or to prove some dogma of religion. Some of the miracles are commemorated by public monuments, which would not have been erected if the facts had not been well established.

Now, I maintain that miracles so numerous and wonderful, performed at all times, and in so public and striking a manner, necessarily prove the divinity of the religion in favor of which they were wrought. It is evident that God alone could work all these miracles; for only the All-powerful Being can thus change and suspend the laws of nature. God, alone, can raise the dead to life, stop the sun in its course, open to a whole people a passage through the sea, and nourish four or five thousand persons with a few loaves of bread. But could God, the author of truth, work so many prodigies to support falsehood and confirm a false religion? No, my brethren, God could not do this; and we might as well say that God does not exist as to suppose that He could deceive us in such a manner.

But there is a miracle which no one will deny and which, itself alone, would sufficiently prove the divinity of the Christian religion: It is the very establishment of the Christian religion. It appeared at first only in a small corner of the world, and was preached by twelve poor fishermen, without talent, without credit, without power, who had no weapons but prayer and the force which comes with conviction. And what kind of religion did they preach? A religion whose morals are in direct and constant opposition to all the inclinations of nature and to all the prejudices, habits, and teachings of the world.

Nevertheless, it spreads rapidly from city to city, and from village to village; it passes soon the limits of the kingdom which saw it rise. The apostles left the Cenacle, animated with a courage which nothing could frighten and a zeal which nothing could restrain, and went forth to announce the Gospel in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, and to the most remote parts of the known world, and in a few years the Christian religion was known everywhere. But what great obstacles had not the apostles to overcome! What violent attacks from the pagan philosophers! What threats, what torments from tyrants! But nothing could stop the torrent of truth. The obstacles which they opposed to it only caused its force to increase; the more victims were put to death the more the number of the neophytes increased, and as Tertullian so beautifully said: «The blood of the martyrs became the seed of Christians.»

Is not this rapid propagation of the Christian religion, in spite of so many obstacles of every kind, and in spite of the weakness of the means employed to establish it in the world, an evident proof of its divinity? St. Augustine says: «Either this religion was supported by miracles, or it was not; and if it was established without miracles, it is the greatest of all miracles; and in both cases, it can only have God for its author.»

III. Finally, my brethren, a last proof, and certainly not the least, is the character of holiness with which it is invested. The Christian religion is holy in its founder, in its doctrine, and in its followers.

The founder of the Christian religion is Jesus Christ, whom even the Jews, His most bitter enemies, never reproach with the least fault, whose innocence Pilate openly proclaimed, who practiced charity, meekness, humility, chastity, and all virtues to so high a degree that one of the Roman Emperors wished to place Him in the rank of the gods. What an incomparable life was the life of Christ! There was neither excess, nor defect; He gave us the example of all virtues, even the most difficult, and practiced them with a sovereign perfection.

And what was the doctrine of Christ? Read the Gospel, and you will find that never was anything more pure and more holy. Not only does it condemn vice, but even the slightest faults, even the very desire of evil. Towards God, it prescribes the most perfect worship and the most august and touching ceremonies; towards our neighbor, not only justice and charity but even the pardon of injuries

and the love of our enemies; towards ourselves, detachment from the goods of this world, contempt of honors, patience and resignation in the pains of life, self-denial and continual mortification of the senses and passions.

I ask you, whether a religion that did not come from heaven could give to man a doctrine so complete, salutary, and noble, and carry man to such a high point of perfection? What a parallel could be established between the evangelical morals and those of the philosophers, incomplete as they are and disfigured by so many errors! What a difference, especially, when compared with the morals of paganism, which raised altars to the most shameful vices, personified in a Bacchus, a Minerva, and a Venus?

Moreover, what great men, eminent in sanctity, did not the Christian religion produce at all times and among all nations? Consider the lives of the apostles and the first disciples, read the history of the anchorites and confessors of faith, study the history of the virgins in the world and in the cloister, and of so many other persons of every age, state, and condition. What zeal for the glory of God, what charity, what devotedness towards their fellowmen, what purity, what austerity, and mortification of self! Ah! if the Christian religion were practiced everywhere, what order would reign in the world, what peace, what happy relations between the poor and the rich, what tranquillity in families, what sweet harmony and charity among all men! We can see the proof of this in the first centuries, when the faithful were of *only one heart and one soul* (Acts IV.: 32), when they knew neither *mine* nor *thine*, when all things were common to all. What happy times, my brethren, but, alas! we hardly preserve even the remembrance of them!

Consider, moreover, the wonderful effects which Christianity has produced. It destroyed polygamy, divorce, slavery, and the killing of children among pagan nations; it diminished the horrors of war, and introduced everywhere security in commerce, decency in morals, and a kindness in society. "A wonderful thing it is," said the famous philosopher Montesquieu, "that the Christian religion, which seems to have no other object but happiness in the next life, makes, also, the happiness of the present life."

No wonder that a religion so wonderful and so pure should be confirmed with the most glorious testimonials and should command the respect of such men of genius as a Tertullian, an Origen, an

Augustine, a John Chrysostom, a Bossuet, a Descartes, a Newton, a Leibnitz, etc. Ah, let us consider ourselves happy to be disciples of such a religion! Let us be proud of the name of Christian; and when obstacles present themselves, let us arm ourselves as the saints have done, with a holy zeal and an immovable courage, by looking forward to the eternal felicity which will be one day our reward. Amen.

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## XIX. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Church*

I. After having convinced ourselves of the divinity of the Christian religion, there remains for us to inquire which among the churches, calling themselves Christian, is the true Church, the real spouse of Jesus Christ? It is with the different churches as with the different religions; there can be only one true Church. We cannot honor God by acts directly opposed to each other, any more than we can reach heaven by contrary roads.

There are many sects which pretend to be the true Church founded by Jesus Christ, such as Lutheranism, which flourishes chiefly in Germany; Calvinism, which dominates in Switzerland; Anglicanism, which is established in England; the Greek Schismatic Church, which flourishes principally in Russia and Greece; finally the hundreds of American sects, all claiming to be the true Church of Christ.

Is any one of these sects the true Church, or does this august prerogative belong solely to the Roman Catholic Church, of which we have the happiness to be members? This, my brethren, is the important question into which we are to inquire to-day.

II. Four marks serve to distinguish the true Church from all other churches: unity, sanctity, catholicity, and apostolicity. We profess this belief every time we recite the Apostles' Creed, saying: *I believe in the Holy Catholic Church*; or in the Nicene Creed: *I believe in*

*One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.* These four marks are absolutely essential to it, and, consequently, any church that does not possess them cannot be the true Church.

III. The Church must be *One.* This means that those who compose it must profess the same faith, partake of the same Sacraments, and be subject to the same lawful pastors. If we had not all the same faith, or did not all profess the same doctrine, what a strange spectacle would the Church present! We would have in the same society at once truth and error, light and darkness. What kind of a church would that be where some would be baptized and others not, where some would believe themselves bound to annual confession, to Easter communion, and others would believe themselves dispensed from all this? What a confusion and chaos! What would we think of a church, whose members would refuse to obey their lawful pastors, especially the pastor of pastors, the Supreme Pontiff, who directs and governs the entire flock, both shepherds and sheep, dispersed all over the world? Would this not be the most complete anarchy, and "the abomination of desolation in the holy place"? Therefore, the Church of God must be one in its faith, one in its worship, one in submission to the pastors appointed by Jesus Christ.

Among the different societies that call themselves Christians, which is the one that possesses that threefold unity? It is the Roman Catholic Church alone. In fact, while the Protestant sects have never succeeded in having all their followers accept the same doctrine, since each individual claims to interpret the Bible for himself, we see all Catholics believing the same doctrine, worshipping in the same manner, and all obeying the one Supreme Head. The Catholic Church, therefore, alone possesses unity, and unity in all the force of the word. She is *One*: 1st. In faith, because the Creed which we recite here in this church is recited in all the Catholic churches of the world; 2d. One in worship, because in all places the same Sacraments are administered and the same Sacrifice is offered; 3d. One in government, because everywhere the same head is acknowledged — the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, the bishops and the parish priests; so that by obeying the pastors you obey the bishop, and by obeying the bishop you obey the Pope himself. Besides this unity of *fact*, the Church possesses also unity in *principle*, because she excludes from her bosom all those who refuse to submit themselves to her decrees in matters of faith, worship, or discipline.

IV. The Church must be *Holy*. The chaste spouse of Jesus Christ cannot be anything else but holy. She must be holy in her author, in her doctrine, and in her Sacraments, and also in her members, for she must be always prolific in fruits of sanctity.

The Roman Catholic Church possesses this character in the highest degree, and it is one of her most striking marks. She is holy in her *author*, because she has for founder Jesus Christ and His apostles. She is holy in her *doctrine*, because, according to the testimony of her most bitter enemies, she has never taught anything that did not lead men from vice and incline them to virtue. She is holy in her *Sacraments*, which have been established to confer or to increase grace in us. Finally, she is holy in her *members*. We do not mean to maintain that all her members are holy; for with free-will, which God gave to all men, it will be always with the Church of Jesus Christ as with the field of the man where the cockle was found mingled with the good grain. But we mean to say that all are called to become saints, and that, at all times, great numbers of her children became saints. Such are the martyrs, the confessors, the anchorites, the Christian virgins, who have in all ages formed the ornament of the Church. Such in the first centuries and in the Middle Ages were St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Dominic, St. Bernard, the record of whose noble and pure lives history has preserved for us, and whose heroic virtues we still admire. Such in modern times were St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis of Sales, St. Vincent of Paul, and many others, too numerous to mention. And even at the present day what shining examples of virtue we often see, not to mention the many virtuous actions which are done in secret. We find saints in all states and conditions of life. Especially do we find them in the religious life, where evangelical perfection is practiced in so wonderful a manner, and where the charity, the modesty, and all the virtues of the most beautiful times of Christianity seem to be perpetuated. And by what numberless and striking miracles have all the saints of the Church in all ages proved their sanctity! Read their lives, and say whether God in His wisdom would have given such a power to men unless they had been faithful followers of His divine Son.

The Roman Catholic alone possesses the mark of holiness. Indeed, to speak here only of those Protestant sects which we see about us, who were their founders? Luther and Calvin, the most vile and the

most infamous of men, who have acquired a sad celebrity through their unbridled pride and shameful lives. What was their doctrine? It was full of contradictions and of gross errors, and having no fixed principles, it has changed from age to age. In the beginning Protestants maintained that good works and penance were useless, that the state of grace could not be lost, that Jesus Christ died only for the predestined, etc., — teachings which unbridle vice, which trouble the soul, and favor the worst passions. What is their worship? Most of these heretics have neither sacrifice, nor sacraments, except perhaps baptism, and thus everything reduces itself to some prayer or to some meaningless and useless ceremony. And where are the saints that Protestantism has produced? Where are their miracles? Let them point them out; we defy them to show us a single one. How, then, can Protestantism claim to be the true Church? No wonder that its power is declining more and more every day, and that well-disposed Protestants return to the Catholic faith, whilst the others, pushing error to its extreme limits, fall into infidelity. A famous lady, the Countess of Stafford, said that one of the reasons which determined her to leave Protestantism and become a Catholic, was that no Catholic who earnestly sought his salvation ever became a Protestant; whilst on the contrary, we see on all sides Protestants converted to the Catholic faith.

V. The Church must be *Catholic*, that is, spread in all parts of the world, in order that it may be known by all men. It was of this Catholicity that God spoke when He said to Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in the son that would rise from his race (Gen. xii. 2), and when He declared through the mouth of the prophet David, that He would give to His Son for heritage all the nations and the extremities of the earth as his possession, . . . that he would dominate from sea to sea, and from the shores of the great river to the limits of the world, . . . that all the kings would adore him, that all the nations would obey him, that the confines of the earth would become converted in great numbers (Ps. xxviii–xxix). *From the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, my name is great among the nations*, we read in the prophet Malachias, *and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation* (Malach. i. 11). *Go ye into the whole world*, said Jesus Christ to His apostles, *and preach the Gospel to every creature* (Mark xv. 15). *You shall be witness unto me in Jerusalem, and in*

*all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth* (Acts i. 8).

The true Church, therefore, must be Catholic, that is, spread everywhere, and spread more than any heretical sect, in order that everywhere it may be easily distinguished from false religions. It is like a large tree, which tree should overshadow all nations; it is a brilliant sun which should enlighten them and warm them with its benevolent rays.

Now, my brethren, only the Roman Church can claim to possess Catholicity. Cast a glance over the world, and you will find it spread to the east, to the west, to the north, and to the south; not, indeed, that it embraces all the countries at once, but in the sense that it exists in the greatest part of the known world. It is supreme in Italy, in France, in Spain, in Portugal, in Belgium, in Poland, in Austria, and in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies of Africa, Asia, and America. Even in those countries where it does not include the greatest number of the inhabitants, it counts a large number of followers, as in the United States, in the kingdoms of Northern Europe, in Switzerland, and in the Lutheran States of Germany. She has also numerous children in the East, living among the Turks and the schismatic Greeks, and even among the idolatrous nations of China, Tonquin, and Oceanica, and every day she increases her conquests and brings the most savage tribes to the knowledge of faith.

Is it thus with the heretical and schismatical sects? No, my brethren, in fact the Greek Church exists only in Russia and in some countries of the East, and is entirely unknown in Africa and America. As to the Protestant Church, besides being divided into numberless sects which have neither union nor common creed, and which could be rightly regarded as so many distinct churches, it claims only a few countries of the world; it is almost totally unknown in Italy, Spain, and France, and it is very little known in Asia, Africa, and South America. In the United States it is more widespread.

Moreover, the Roman Church alone has always borne the name of Catholic. It is a title proper to her; and heretics themselves are obliged to call her thus if they wish to be understood, as St. Augustine said, for it thus that everybody calls her. What a privilege, my brethren, to be children of this Church! How proud may we be to say, as the ancient martyrs, Christian is my name, Catholic is my surname! This character of Catholicity which the Roman Catholic

Church has always preserved, from the beginning, in spite of all the attacks of heresy and schism, and in spite of all the defections from her ranks, would be in itself a sufficient proof that she is the true Church.

There are, nevertheless, many Christians who are far from being sufficiently instructed on the evident marks of truth which are offered by the Catholic Church, to which they have the happiness to belong. Some are Catholics because they have been raised in the Catholic religion or because they were born of Catholic parents, or because everything around them is more or less Catholic; that is, they are Catholics without knowing why. Hence, that lukewarmness in the faith, that indifference, that sort of practical incredulity which is almost worse than heresy itself. Know well that in the Christian society, there is only one Church that is the true one, and this Church is the Roman Catholic Church of which we are members. She preserves the marks of Unity, Sanctity, and Catholicity which it is impossible to deny. Therefore, let us attach ourselves firmly to this Church, let us love it from the bottom of our hearts, let us listen to its voice as obedient children, and let us always put its teachings into practice.

The fourth mark or character of the Church, is the *Apostolicity*. There is no mark, it seems, more convincing, and more easily to be understood than this one. But the subject is important and extensive, and, therefore, we shall reserve it for the next instruction.

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## XX. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Church*

In order that you may better understand what I have to say about Apostolicity, the fourth mark of the Church, which distinguishes it strongly from the heretical and schismatical sects, it is necessary for me to go back to the beginning, and to show you how the Church was founded by our divine Master.

I. What did Jesus Christ do when He wished to establish this holy and incorruptible Church which should soon be spread all over the world, to preach therein the true religion and to perpetuate the same until the end of time? He commenced by choosing twelve apostles to whom He added seventy-two disciples in order to assist them in the sacred ministry. These twelve apostles were Peter and Andrew, his brother; James, son of Zebedee, and John, his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew; James, son of Alpheus and Thadeus; Simon of Cana, and Judas Iscariot, who is the one that betrayed Him. And as every society must have a head, and, especially, a society like the Church destined to embrace the whole world, Christ appointed Peter the Prince of the Apostles, the Head of the entire Church, in saying to him: *Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matt. xvi. 18). And at another time He said: *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. xvi. 19). And what He promised here He gave to him in full after His resurrection at the time when having required from him a threefold testimony of love, in expiation of his threefold denial, Jesus said to Him: *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep* (Matt. xxi. 17). This means: I will establish thee pastor of My whole flock, and I entrust to thee its care; thou shalt have full power not only over the lambs, who are the simple faithful, but also over the sheep, that is over the apostles, or the bishops, their successors, and the other inferior pastors.

It was in these terms, that our Saviour gave to St. Peter that primacy of honor and of jurisdiction which authorized him to do and ordain all that he would believe necessary for the general good of the Church. He was the foundation and cornerstone of that building which should last until the end of time. Before ascending into heaven He said to all His apostles: *All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. . . . And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 18–20). And it was in virtue of this divine mission, and to obey the orders of their divine Master, that the apostles, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, travelled to all parts

of the earth to preach the Gospel. St. James remained at Jerusalem; St. John fixed himself at Ephesus and founded the churches of Asia Minor; St. Andrew went to the Scythians; St. Thomas went as far as India; St. Philip passed into Upper Asia; St. Bartholomew into Armenia; St. Matthew into Ethiopia; St. Simon into Mesopotamia and Persia; St. Jude into Arabia and Idumea; St. Mathias, who was elected in the place of Judas, went into Africa; St. Paul, who was not of the number of the twelve, but who does not any the less merit the name of apostle, gained for Christ numberless nations; and St. Peter, the head of all, the leader of the apostolic choir, as St. John Chrysostom calls him, after having preached to the Jews, dispersed in Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia, in Asia and Bythinia, and after having resided seven years at Antioch, entered Rome, at that time the center of pagan superstition, and fixed his See in the capital of the world in order to make it the capital of the Christian religion.

II. Such was the beginning of the Church, established by the apostles, assisted by the seventy-two disciples, with St. Peter as their head. But the apostles could not live forever, and sooner or later death claimed them like the rest of men. What would become of the rising Church, if deprived of its illustrious founders? Was it to perish with them? No, my brethren, the Church was founded to last until the end of the world; and it is written that all the powers of hell shall never prevail against her. Jesus Christ, her divine founder, has provided for all; He ordained that the mission and the powers which He gave to the apostles, and particularly to St. Peter, their chief, should pass to their successors; that new pastors, whom we call bishops, should replace the apostles; that our Holy Father, the Pope, should succeed St. Peter, and that thus, from age to age, they should transmit, from one to another, the power of ordaining priests, of preaching the word of God, of administering the sacraments — in one word, the power to do all that would be necessary for the government of the Church.

This is what we call the apostolic succession. Do you wish to know which, among the Christian Churches, is the true Church of Jesus Christ? There is only one thing you have to do: to see in which one is found this apostolic succession, that is, that uninterrupted series of bishops who have succeeded the apostles in the government of the Church which they have founded, and of the Popes

who have succeeded St. Peter in the see of Rome. For it is self-evident that any church whose ministers cannot trace their power back to the time of the apostles, cannot be the true Church, because it lacks, so to say, the sap of the stem and the source of life; and that the Church which, in all times, has been in communion with the sees founded by the apostles, and especially with the see of Peter, can alone be the true Church of Christ.

Now, open the most authentic books of history and you will find that, even by the avowal of its enemies, the Roman Catholic Church has been constantly governed by pontiffs, whose unbroken line extends back to the apostolic times; so that from Pope Leo XIII., gloriously reigning to-day, we can trace the succession from Pope to Pope, back to St. Peter, and consequently to Jesus Christ Himself. We have the exact list of all the sovereign pontiffs, and generally even the date of their election and of their death. It is the same for the bishops who succeeded the apostles, and whose line of succession is, for the most part, uninterrupted. This unbroken line of the succession of sovereign pontiffs touched St. Augustine, and made him say that this was one of the most powerful arguments that retained him in the Church.

What other church can show us a succession so clear and so imposing? This was the challenge which Tertullian made to all the enemies of the Church, although at that time it had existed only two centuries. And what would he have said had he seen an uninterrupted succession of nearly nineteen hundred years? How could the Protestants answer Tertullian, since they exist only three centuries? We need only to ask them: Show us the origin of your churches; show us the list of your bishops or pastors back to that one of the apostles. Who are you? Whence do you come? Since when do you exist? Who was a Lutheran before Luther appeared, a Calvinist before Calvin, an Anglican before Henry VIII.? How do Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII. trace their origin to the apostles? Whom did they succeed? Who is the pastor that appointed them and from whom did they receive their doctrine? They have intruded themselves into the government of the Church; they were sent by themselves; for them there is no apostolic succession. With such reasoning we can always confound every heretical and schismatical sect. We need only remind all the innovators of their origin; we need only tell them: You are but of yesterday, you have separated yourselves from the Catholic

Church, as a branch which is cut away from a tree; therefore, you do not belong to the true Church.

But thou, O Roman Catholic Church, thou art apostolic; thy pastors go back by an uninterrupted series to the time of the apostles; and to this mark thou joinest all the others that are proper to the Church! Thou hast unity in faith, in worship, and in the evangelical ministry; thou hast holiness, and incontestable miracles render daily testimony to the virtues that spring up in thy bosom and to the spirit of God that animates thee; thou art incomparably the most widely spread of all Christian churches; thou art Catholic, thou art universal!

Thou art, therefore, the true Church, thou alone art the true ark of Noah, the column of truth, the chaste spouse of Jesus Christ. To thee be honor, respect, and homage. To thee fidelity, submission, and love. We are happy to be of thy children and we will attach ourselves to thee forever, and we promise this here before the altar. Neither the wicked maxims of the world, nor persecutions, nor death itself, will be able to separate us from thee. As the great Bossuet said: "May my tongue dry up in my mouth, may my right hand be cut off, if ever I say or do anything unworthy of thee!"

And thou august and holy Pontiff, who sittest on the imperishable chair of Rome, thou art the head of the whole Church, the successor of Peter, the vicar of Jesus Christ, the father of all the faithful, thou who since many years hadst to bear so many attacks, who hadst to wrestle against the combined efforts of heresy, schism, and impiety; thou who, like an immovable rock in the midst of raging waves, hast triumphed thus far over all the storms and all the tempests that have assailed thee; permit us, the least and humblest of thy children, to pay thee our homage of profound veneration and devotedness. Ah! we know that great tribulations agitate thy soul; but what consoles us and removes our fears is that thou *art Peter, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee.* Amen.

## XXI. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed (*Cont'd*)

*On the Church*

I. According to all that has been said in the preceding instructions, the Roman Church is the true, and the only true, Church. Thus, when we speak of the Church in the United States, in France, in Spain or Italy, we do not mean to say that these are so many different churches. Under these various names we designate simply the particular churches, which are portions of the true Church, because they are united to one another by the bonds of the same faith, and by the submission to the same lawful pastors.

So, also, when we make mention of the militant church, the suffering church, or the triumphant church, we always mean to speak of the same Church, but considered in three different states. When we speak of the Church upon earth, we call it the militant Church, on account of the attacks which the faithful have to withstand; when we speak of the Church in purgatory, we call it the suffering Church, on account of the torments which these souls have to endure that have not entirely satisfied the justice of God; and when we speak of the Church in heaven, we call it the triumphant Church, on account of the joys and triumphs of the saints. All this means that among the members of the Church, there are some in heaven, others upon earth, and others in purgatory, but they are all brethren, forming together only one and the same Church.

II. From this fundamental truth that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church, and the only true Church, we may derive important consequences. The first is, the impossibility of working out one's salvation outside the Church. In fact, no one can be saved without living the life of Jesus Christ; that is, without believing and practicing all that He teaches us; and no one can live the life of Jesus Christ who does not belong to the true Church. Whoever is not of the true Church of Christ is like a branch cut off from the vine, and good for nothing but to cast into the fire. The Church is that ark of Noah outside of which none could escape the Deluge. This is what our Saviour Himself teaches us when He says that *if anyone will not hear*

*the Church, he must be looked upon as a heathen and a publican* (Matt. xviii. 17).

Those who are outside the way of salvation are: 1st. All those that have not received baptism, such as Pagans, Jews, Mohammedans; 2d. Apostates, who abjure Christianity, and who are worse than infidels; 3d. Heretics who refuse to believe one or more truths of faith and whom the Church has anathematized; 4th. Schismatics, who do not wish to acknowledge the authority of the lawful pastors; 5th. Finally, excommunicated persons whom the Church has cut off from her society.

These different classes being outside the fold of Jesus Christ, can have no part in His rewards, which He has promised only to His disciples.

However, the Church rejects only those of her rebellious children who remain obstinate in their revolt, or who are in bad faith, and who do not wish to abandon their errors, although they know they are in the wrong. But as to those who are not yet of an age to recognize their error, or who sincerely believe themselves to be in the bosom of the true Church, although they are not, we may say that their good faith will save them. As to those who have not received baptism, such as infidels, Jews, and pagans, the difficulty is greater, because our Lord has said *that unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God* (John iii. 5). However, as the baptism of desire is sufficient, when the baptism of water cannot be received, if a person faithfully observes the natural law, and has the intention to do all that is necessary for salvation, such a one would be held to have at least the implicit desire of baptism, and perhaps it would be possible, as such pious and learned authors as St. Liguori, the Cardinal of La Luzerne, and the Abbe Frayssinous teach, that the gates of heaven will be opened to them. In any case, such persons would be in the same state as those who lived before the preaching of the Gospel, and if they lead pure and innocent lives, God, in His mercy, will find a hundred means to call them to the knowledge of the truth.

Be it as it may, my brethren, let us thank the Lord for having caused us to be born in the bosom of the true Church, for having placed us, from our infancy, in the mystic ark where salvation is so easy. Let us pray to Him to spread more and more upon the earth the light of the Gospel, and let us join, if possible, the *Society for the*

*Propagation of the Faith*, that most excellent work of our time, in order to do what we can, that all those peoples who still sleep in the darkness of error, may come to know the way of truth.

III. The second consequence is that the Church must have four other qualities, not less essential than the marks of which we spoke before, namely: visibility, infallibility, supreme authority, and perpetuity. If the Church were not visible, the faithful could not know where it is; if it were not infallible, it might lead us into error; if it had no supreme authority, it could not impose laws upon us and there would be in her bosom neither order nor discipline; if it were not perpetual, there would come a time when persons could no longer be saved.

The Roman Church possesses, in an eminent degree, these four prerogatives. 1st. She is *visible*, because she has a visible head in our Holy Father the Pope, visible ministers in the bishops and priests. 2d. She is *infallible*, for our Lord has given to her this privilege of infallibility, when He established her *the pillar and ground of truth* (Tim. III. 15); and when He said, speaking to the apostles, and to their successors in the person of the apostles: *Go, and teach all nations. . . . Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. XXVIII. 20). In fact, where Jesus Christ is, there is the truth, the very essence of truth and there can be no error. But to understand this well, we must distinguish between the hearing Church and the teaching Church. The hearing Church is composed of all the faithful who hear and believe what the Church teaches; and the teaching Church comprises all the bishops, with the holy Father, the Pope, at their head. To the bishops, collectively, with the Pope at their head, and to the Pope, individually, Christ gave infallibility. The bishops enjoy this privilege, either when they are assembled in an Ecumenical Council, or when they remain dispersed all over the world, but judge dogmatically, and according to canonical rules. When the Church has thus pronounced a decision and when she has declared anathema against all those who dare to maintain the contrary of what she teaches, we would sin grievously if we were to deny the truths which she has defined, and we would be heretics if we would obstinately continue in our denial.

We have said that infallibility was granted to the Church collectively, that is, to all the bishops, with the Pope at their head, and individually to the Pope alone. The Pope is the successor of St.

Peter. Now, our Blessed Lord conferred upon St. Peter *personally* and *independently* the authority of infallible teaching, which He had just given to all the apostles *dependently on and subordinately to* St. Peter. At the Last Supper Jesus singled out St. Peter from the other apostles, and addressed him thus: *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren* (Luke xxii. 31–32). St. Peter was thus made personally infallible in his teaching as head of the Church, for, if he himself were capable of erring, he could not confirm his brethren in the faith.

The fact that our Saviour gave St. Peter, personally and independently, the power of teaching infallibly, is the foundation of what was always held in the Catholic Church as her general and approved teaching. When the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, and the successor of St. Peter publishes any decree in matters of faith or morals, that is, when teaching *ex Cathedra*, he is infallible. This doctrine, though dragged into controversy, as far back as the fifteenth century, was not solemnly defined until 1870 in the Vatican Council.

It is quite different, my brethren, with the doctrine of Protestantism, which, by its principle of free interpretation, gives every one the right to discuss the Scriptures and to believe only what seems good to him. But what has been the consequence? Protestantism, in the same measure as it developed itself, became divided into numberless sects, each accusing and combatting the other, so that to-day we cannot find two among them that have the same belief. This is another proof that the Holy Ghost does not reside with them, and that, consequently, their religion is false. These endless dissensions and continual differences in the bosom of Protestantism show us the necessity of an infallible authority to regulate the faith and settle our minds. Either there is no Church at all, or it must have an absolutely infallible authority, for without this authority it could not form a body and preserve the unity necessary to it.

3d. The Church has supreme authority for the government of consciences. Our Lord clothed her with this power when He said to His apostles, as He had said to St. Peter in particular: *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 18). And again when He said: *He that heareth you heareth*

*me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me* (Luke x. 16). And, finally, when He declared that he who does not hear the Church should be regarded as a heathen and a publican (Matt. xviii. 17). Jesus Christ gave to His Church His own authority; and, consequently, to disobey her would be to disobey Jesus Christ Himself. Whence it follows that the commandments which the Church imposes upon us, such as those of fast and abstinence, of annual confession and of Easter communion, are as binding upon us as the commandments of God. To transgress them in a grievous matter would be to incur damnation; and there is even, in certain cases, the pain of excommunication for those who refuse to acknowledge this.

4th. Finally, the Roman Church will last until the end of the world. Our divine Saviour made this magnificent promise when He said that *it was built upon a rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it* (Matt. xv. 18). According to the language of the Scriptures, the gates of hell signify the infernal powers, and the malice and impiety of men inspired by the devil, who will always be powerless in his attacks against the Church. Christ gave to His Church a new assurance of perpetuity, when, before ascending into heaven, He solemnly declared that He would be with her until the end of the world. Indeed, how could our Lord be with His Church if this Church should cease to exist?

Besides, my brethren, an assured pledge of this promise, and a striking proof that the Church will not perish, is the fact that she has existed nearly nineteen hundred years. We have a right to conclude that she will exist to the end of time. If the Church could perish, then certainly she would have perished long ago. Indeed, what attacks had not the Church to withstand, and to what trials has she not been subject from the beginning down to our own days! During the first three centuries, the entire pagan world waged a bloody war against her and tried to crush her by every imaginable means. We cannot read the history of so many thousands of martyrs without shuddering with terror, and without being roused to indignation against the tyrants of this epoch, who exhausted everything that the evil spirit could invent, and employed the most barbarous and atrocious torments in order to make the Christians abjure their faith. But as the rage and fury of the tyrants redoubled, the number of the faithful increased. When persecutions ceased, heresies and schisms arose. Enemies appeared in the very bosom of the Church, and

Arians, Nestorians, Pelagians, Protestants, Jansenists, and many other heresies followed one another from century to century, and attacked one after another the dogmas of the Catholic faith. In modern times, my brethren, what has not an infidel French philosophical school done, what efforts were not made by Voltaire, by Rousseau, and so many others, to destroy not only the Church, but the entire Christian religion! What treacherous sophisms, what sarcasms, what detestable insults! What contempt thrown on the dogmas and the practice of faith! Finally, what did not that great French Revolution do, nearly a hundred years ago, the fruit of the pernicious doctrines of an infidel philosophy! Everywhere in France altars were overthrown, the churches closed, and streets ran with the blood of the priests, bishops, and nobles of the country. If the Church had not been maintained by some divine power, it would have perished hundreds of times amid such terrible trials and dreadful persecutions of every kind. But the hand of God was there, and the raging waves broke against this immovable rock. Thrones have tottered and fallen, civil constitutions have been destroyed, and society itself nearly perished, but the Church, though attacked on every side, has come forth triumphant from the combat, as a victorious soldier, all covered with blood, comes forth from a battlefield. The impiety of some and the barbarity of others have only added to the vigor of the Church and served to render her more resplendent and beautiful. Every day she makes new conquests. Bulgaria has just been converted and has reëntered the bosom of unity; England seems to stretch forth its arms towards the Church; China has opened her ports to Catholic missionaries, and in these United States the Church has made immense progress during the last hundred years.

But what has been the lot of the enemies of the Church, of those who sought to destroy her? Read their history. What a spectacle! What has become of the synagogue which tried to smother the rising Church in her cradle? It is gone, and those infamous tyrants who tried to crush her in her growth, they are dead and their empire is destroyed. And those great heresiarchs, Arius, Pelagius, Nestorius, and so many others? They are dead, and the doctrines and sects which bore their names are only a memory. And what of Protestantism? It is split into numberless sects which separate themselves more and more from the doctrines of their founders, and are lost at last in absolute negation of all the truths of the Gospel. And those impious

philosophers of the last century? They have passed like a torrent which leaves only ruins behind it, and their memory has fallen into contempt.

But the Church cannot die. She is always erect. She is the tree which strikes its roots deeper the older it grows and which acquires new force to resist the fury of the wind and storm. Ah! indeed, the Church, or the light of faith may cease to shine in a country! It has abandoned Africa, it has abandoned England, and may abandon any country which continues to abuse its light and graces; but if the Church leaves one place, it is only to establish itself elsewhere, and its losses will always be compensated by new conquests. The Church will always live, until the time shall arrive when its mission will be accomplished, when the earth will be destroyed, and when eternity will commence.

Let us deem ourselves happy, my brethren, to be born in the bosom of the true Church where salvation is so easy, whilst so many thousands have such great difficulties to overcome, and are in danger of being lost forever, because the light of the Gospel is unknown to them. But let us not limit ourselves to a cold and sterile thankfulness. "Noblesse oblige," as we say in things of the world; with much more reason faith puts us under obligations. Since the Church is our mother, since she has brought us forth to Jesus Christ, and since she alone can lead us to Him, let us attach ourselves to her, let us follow her maxims, let us obey her precepts. But this is not yet enough. We must also labor to spread her glory, and to make her loved and respected by all, as a good son should act towards his mother. In this manner, we shall share in her blessings and favors here upon earth, and in heaven have a share in her joys and triumphs. Amen.

## XXII. INSTRUCTION

### Ninth Article of the Creed (*Concluded*)

*On the Communion of Saints*

After having explained to you what the Church is, under what conditions one can be a member of the Church, by what marks it can be distinguished from heretical and schismatical sects, and after having enumerated the various privileges with which its divine founder has endowed it, it remains for me to speak of its riches, its treasury of grace, and of the manner in which it communicates them to us — that is, of the *Communion of Saints.*

I. What do we understand by the Communion of Saints? We understand two things: 1st. The union which exists among the Saints themselves. 2d. Their participation in the spiritual goods of the Church. We do not speak here of the Communion which we receive at the holy table, and which constitutes only a part of the treasures of the Church, but we speak of the treasure of the Church in general, of the share each member of the Church enjoys, and of the ties which unite the members to one another.

But who are the saints of which the Creed speaks? Is it the saints who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, or the holy souls who live upon earth? No, my brethren, we mean all the faithful who are members of the Church, whether they be holy, or whether they be sinners. They are all called saints, because the apostles called all the faithful saints, in the Epistles which they wrote to the different churches. At the head of their Epistles they wrote: *To the Saints of the Church of Rome; To the Saints of Corinth; To the Saints of Ephesus*, etc. In the first centuries there were almost as many saints as faithful. Moreover, we all have been sanctified by baptism, and we all are called to holiness. We do not speak here only of the faithful upon earth, but also of all those who are in purgatory or in heaven; for the triumphant Church, the suffering Church, and the militant Church, all form one and the same Church, and all the members form only one and the same mystical body, whose head is Jesus Christ.

II. How are the saints, that is, all the faithful on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven, united to one another? They are all members

of the same Body, the Church; children of the same father, Jesus Christ; and heirs of the same heavenly kingdom.

The faithful living upon earth, be they just or be they sinners, are united to one another by partaking of the same sacraments and by the submission to the same pastors. And if they are all in the state of sanctifying grace, they are also united by the interior ties of faith, hope, and charity, the same bonds that unite the holy souls in purgatory. But the bond of charity alone unites them to the saints in heaven, for, in the bosom of God, there is no longer any faith or hope, since the saints in heaven see and enjoy the God in whom, on earth, they believed and hoped.

III. It follows from this intimate union which exists among the faithful on earth, that all the spiritual goods of the Church are common to them, and they all share in them, each according to his state. The comparison of the human body will make this clear. In the human body no member exists and labors for itself alone, but all work to assist one another, and the good of each is the good of all the others. Thus, the eye does not see for itself alone, but serves to direct the hands and the feet; the feet move for the good of the whole body, and the stomach digests for the nourishment and support of all the members. Such is the harmony which reigns in the whole body of the Church. The prayers and other good works of each one do not profit him alone, but contribute to the good of all the faithful. Thus, when I pray it is not only for myself that I pray, but for the whole Church. When I do penance, or when I give alms, it is for the whole Church that I do it; each member of the Church has a share in the good work according to his dispositions, as I myself have a share in all the prayers and good works of all the faithful.

But to explain this difficult matter more clearly, we must distinguish two kinds of spiritual goods in the treasury of the Church; the general, or the external goods, and the particular, or internal goods. The general goods are the sacrifice of the Mass, the Sacraments, the preaching of the word of God, the offices of the Church, burial, and other religious ceremonies. The particular goods are the prayers, fasts, alms, mortifications, and other good works of each one in particular, and the indulgences which each individual gains.

As to the general and exterior goods, only those that belong to the body of the Church can partake of them. Apostates, heretics, schismatics, and excommunicated persons have no share in the general

treasures of the Church. We call apostates, or renegades, those who leave the Catholic faith to embrace a false religion. Heretics are those who join a religion condemned by the Church. Schismatics are those who refuse to submit to their lawful pastors, and who, without altering the faith, form a separate society. Excommunicated are those persons whom the Church has cut off from her communion in punishment for some crime. Such rebellious and unnatural children can no longer be admitted to the Sacraments, nor — in Catholic countries — can they assist at the offices of the Church, nor receive Christian burial.

As to the faithful who still belong to the Church by exterior bonds, but who are in a state of mortal sin, they can still share in these general goods of the Church. They may, therefore, assist at the offices of the Church, listen to the word of God, and receive the Christian burial, except in certain cases provided by the sacred canons, such as suicide, or death in the act of crime. They can even be admitted to the Sacraments, but only after a good and sincere penance; and the Church, always a good and tender mother, never ceases to exhort them to penance.

But the faithful who are in the state of mortal sin, although enjoying a share in the external goods of the Church, can have no share in the particular goods of the Church, such as the prayers, alms, penance, and indulgences of the faithful. Being dead to grace, they are like paralyzed members which partake no longer of the life of the body, or like a dry branch through which the sap of the tree no longer circulates. But pious souls can pray for those in mortal sin, and obtain for them the grace of conversion. Only those who are in the state of grace can have part in all the interior goods of the Church. If we are in the state of sanctifying grace, there is not a prayer, not a fast nor an alms-deed, not a Mass without our having a large share in the work. All this contributes to our sanctification and assists us to acquire greater merits. What a consolation, my brethren, for a faithful soul to know that he partakes in all the Masses which are said every day, and in all the churches of the world, and in all the good works, in all the mortifications that are practiced! What a powerful motive for us to persevere in virtue and grace, if we have the happiness to be in that state, and what an incentive to regain the state of grace as soon as possible, if we have had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin!

IV. What a source of consolation it is, my brethren, to know that the Communion of Saints unites us with the saints in heaven and with the holy souls in purgatory! The saints in heaven who already enjoy the eternal happiness have no need of our prayers and good works. They have finished the race, they have received their reward, and there remains nothing for them to desire. But we can praise their virtues, celebrate their triumphs, and beg their intercession. Although they have no need of us, we have need of them, and faith teaches us that they are always ready to help us, and that they enjoy great credit with God. Hence the practice of invoking the protection of the saints in public calamities as well as in particular necessities.

The souls in purgatory can help us but little, according to the common opinion of the Doctors of the Church. Shut up in their fiery prison, their time of merit is past. They can do nothing for themselves and nothing for us. But what they cannot do, we can do, and it devolves upon us to relieve them, and even to deliver them, by our prayers and good works. As the saints who are in heaven can assist us by their prayers, so, also, we can contribute to the deliverance to these unfortunate souls, not only by our prayers, but also by our mortifications, fasts, alms, indulgences, and, especially, by the application of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. My brethren, a day will come when these holy souls, powerless now, can be infinitely useful to us; for once admitted into heaven, they will remember those who remembered them, and they will repay a hundredfold all that we have done for them.

We give thee thanks, O God, because, by a particular favor, thou hast made us members of this holy society! How beautiful and consoling is the faith of our Church! But let not this faith remain barren in our souls; and since it teaches us that the state of grace is necessary in order that we may share in the prayers and good works of the faithful, let us try to be always in a state of grace; let us redouble our zeal and fervor for the relief of our brethren who are in purgatory and who claim our help, and let us invoke the assistance of those other brethren who have finished their earthly pilgrimage, and who have gained the celestial inheritance, in order that they may assist us also to merit eternal glory. Amen.

## XXIII. INSTRUCTION

### Tenth Article of the Creed

*The Forgiveness of Sins*

Just as the doctrine of the Communion of Saints consoles the Christian who lives by faith, so does the dogma of the remission of sins. We are sinners from our birth, and what would become of us if God's justice were inexorable, and if, after having once incurred His wrath, there should be no means left to reconcile ourselves with Him? But God is goodness itself. He did not create us to be lost; and so, foreseeing our weakness and frailty, He gave His Church the power to remit sins. And He even made the power of forgiveness of sins an article of faith, so that neither the number, nor the enormity of our crimes, might ever discourage us.

I. Only God has the power of forgiving sins, because only the one against whom the offense is committed can forgive it. This is why the Pharisees were scandalized when they heard the Saviour say to the paralytic: *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* They murmured loudly against Him, saying: *Who can forgive sins but God alone?* But our Lord confounded them instantly: *That you may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, . . . I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house* (Luke v. 20–24); thus proving to them His divinity in the plainest manner, because the divine power is not less necessary for miracles than for sin itself.

II. But the one who has the power to forgive sins, can undoubtedly commit it to others; and this is what our divine Saviour did when He said to His apostles: *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 18). And this power, to bind and to loose, is nothing else than the power to forgive or to retain sins. Our Lord expressed Himself in a still clearer manner, when, on the eve of His ascension, He spoke to His apostles these solemn words: *As the Father has sent me, I send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (John xx. 23). What could be clearer and more precise? But our Saviour did not mean to confer this power upon His apostles only; He wished to grant it also

to their successors until the end of the world. For the fruit of His death was to remain forever; the gates of heaven were always to be open to the faithful; man ought to be always able to say: *I believe in the remission of sins.* Faith teaches us that the power to judge consciences and to remit sins has passed from the apostles to the bishops whom they consecrated, and from the bishops to their lawful successors, who have communicated it, and communicate it still, to all those whom they ordain to the divine ministry; and it will be transmitted in the same manner to the end of the world.

III. Did you ever seriously reflect on this great and ineffable power which God has bestowed upon the priests to remit sins? A simple priest, a mortal man like you, to be invested with the power to say to any sinner, even to the greatest criminal in the world: *Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee!* After the power of consecrating the body and blood of Jesus Christ, there is no power on earth greater than this. The priests of the Old Law had, indeed, the power to declare the healing of a leper, but they had not the power of curing him. Kings and princes of the earth can act only on the body, but they have no power over the soul. The angels themselves in heaven cannot remit one single venial sin. There is no power upon earth or even in heaven that can be compared to the power of the priest. If you should see a priest go up to a grave and call a dead man to life, you would be amazed at the miracle, and justly so. But is it not a more wonderful thing to raise a dead soul to the life of grace, to snatch it from the slavery of the devil, and open to it the gates of heaven? This is what the priest does in the sacrament of penance. Sitting in the tribunal of penance, as a judge on the bench, he decides upon the state of consciences and the salvation of souls; he pronounces sentence, he absolves or retains sins, and whatever he does, God holds as done by Himself, and ratifies the act in heaven.

Such is the power which Jesus gave to the priests, such is the preëminent dignity with which He has invested them. Is there anything else necessary to render them worthy of all your respect? And remember that God has not only allowed them to remit slight faults or failings, but all kinds of sins, however numerous and grievous they may be. He wished that there should be no sin that could not be forgiven, except final impenitence, or death in sin. This is a sin against the Holy Ghost, of which our Saviour said that it shall not be remitted either in this world, or in the world to come. It cannot be remitted

in this world, because the sinner refuses repentance until to the very end, and it cannot be remitted in the next world, because after death there is no longer any forgiveness of sin. But it is not less true that in this world God never rejects a contrite and humble heart, and that He has given to His Church the power to remit all sins. Let us bless the Lord, my brethren, for this grace; and however great our guilt, let us never be discouraged. But let us also be careful not to fall into the contrary excess; and let not an over-confidence in the goodness of God be a motive of offending Him anew. Woe to us if we are wicked because God is good. His justice is as great as His mercy, and sooner or later He will demand a strict account of such malice and such ingratitude.

IV. The sacraments by which the Church remits sins, are baptism and penance. Baptism remits original sin and all the sins one may have committed, after attaining the age of reason. Penance remits the sins committed after baptism. The sacrament of Extreme Unction has also the power of remitting sins in certain cases, as when a sick person is unable to make his confession.

But it is, especially, the sacrament of penance that has been instituted for the remission of sin. We shall explain this sacrament in the proper place. However, I cannot let this favorable occasion pass by without saying a few words on the great benefits it procures for us, or without exhorting you often to have recourse to it. We often greatly deceive ourselves in regard to the sacrament of penance. We look upon confession as a thing so hard and so painful, that some evade it altogether, and others make use of it as seldom as possible. And, nevertheless, my brethren, after Holy Communion there is nothing more consoling, more useful, and more salutary than confession. Is it, then, a matter of indifference to be enabled, by so simple a means, to obtain pardon of all our sins, to escape eternal damnation which we have incurred, and to regain all our rights to heaven? Moreover, what means is there more efficacious than confession to remind us of our duties, and what bulwark more sure against the raging of our passions! And what peace, what calm, what joy, does confession not procure to the soul! You feel that a great burden has been raised from off the soul. The words of the priest: *Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee*, bring you unspeakable happiness. It was this that made Tertullian say that the happiness of a sinner on earth is penance: *Poenitentia hominis rei felicitas.* Undoubtedly, you have

experienced this. Were you ever happier and more content than when leaving the tribunal of penance absolved from your sins, after a long course of iniquity and shame! Every day we priests see examples of the happiness confession procures. Ah! how many sinners have cast themselves at the feet of the priest with a conscience full of trouble, anxiety, and bitterness, and who have risen so consoled, so happy, that they seemed to carry heaven in their heart! It is related that a wealthy man, having had the misfortune to commit a grievous fault, was so filled with shame that he never had the courage to confess the sin. Having heard some one say that there was no obligation to confess forgotten sins, he tried by every means to lose all remembrance of the sin which caused him so much shame. He indulged in entertainments, in long travels, in serious studies; he tried everything to ease his conscience; but all in vain. His sin was always before his eyes; and as time went on remorse oppressed him all the more. In his despair he resolved to put an end to his life, and he was already on his way to accomplish his purpose. But a kind Providence was watching over him. He met a holy priest, who divined the state of his soul. The holy man spoke to the sinner of confession, he exhorted and encouraged him to penance; he even went so far as to ask him whether it was not a certain crime, naming the sin, that alarmed him so much. It was the very sin that he had so long concealed. The unfortunate sinner fell at the feet of the holy man, made his confession, opened his heart to him, and received absolution. His joy was unbounded, and he said to the holy priest: "O Father, from how much anguish of mind confession has delivered me! O, what a serenity, and what a joy a good confession brings to the soul!"

V. Since such are the graces and consolations which the sacrament of penance procures to us, let us often have recourse to it. And you especially, sinners, who are in a state of spiritual death, removed from God and on the road to hell, why do you neglect so sure and so efficacious a remedy? Do not let false shame or human respect deter you. When there is a question of peace and of the salvation of your soul, can you give way to such a weakness? Do not content yourselves with an annual confession during Easter time; come often to plunge yourselves into this wholesome bath. This is the duty which you should remember every time you recite the tenth article of the Creed: *I believe in the forgiveness of sins.* If you believe that the

priest has received from Jesus Christ the power to absolve you, is it not criminal negligence not to have recourse to his sacred ministry? In order that it may produce happy fruits in your souls, try to bring to the sacred tribunal the necessary dispositions—I mean that profound sorrow for your faults, and that sincere resolution to amend them, without which everything else is useless. You will obtain pardon and mercy, will draw down upon yourselves treasures of graces, and will open to yourselves the gates of eternal life. Amen.

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## XXIV. INSTRUCTION

### Eleventh Article of the Creed

*I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body*

I. To rise again, my brethren, is to come to life again after death. The words: *I believe in the resurrection of the body*, signify therefore: I believe that the dead shall rise again. And we say: *I believe in the resurrection of the body*, and not in the resurrection of man, because man does not die entirely; only his *body* dies. Thus, by this article we make profession of faith in the immortality of the soul. We profess to believe that the body and soul will be reunited at the last day; and that all the bodies which are moldering in the earth, or buried in the depths of the sea, will gather all the members of which they were composed, will resume their original shape, and be human creatures again as before.

This important truth is attested by both the Old and New Testament, as well as by tradition: *I know*, said the holy man Job, in his afflictions, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God* (Job xix. 25–26).

It was by this same faith that the Machabees consoled themselves in the midst of cruel torments which the impious Antiochus caused them to endure. *Thou, indeed, O most wicked man*, cried out one of them on the point of death, *destroyest us out of this wicked life; but*

*the King of the world will raise us up, who die for his laws, in the resurrection of eternal life* (II. Mach. VII. 9).

*The hour cometh*, says Jesus Christ, *wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment* ( John V. 28).

*I know*, said Martha, *that my brother shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day* (John XI. 24). *God*, says St. Paul (I. Cor. VI. 14), *hath raised up the Lord, and will raise us up also by His own power.*

St. Gregory relates that Eutychius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who did not believe in the resurrection of the body, having fallen sick and finding himself at the point of death, desired to make a public retraction of his error, and in the presence of assistants, he repeated several times the following words: "I believe and confess that we all shall rise again in the flesh. I have erred when I said and maintained the contrary." And after having made this solemn profession of faith, he recommended himself to God and died in peace.

II. It is an article of faith that we all shall rise again, and that we shall rise with the same body which we had during life; with this difference, however, that then we shall no longer be subject to the imperfections we had during life. Thus, after the resurrection, the blind will recover their sight, the crippled will have the use of their members. Our body will be restored in its perfection and its natural integrity. We shall rise again, not in a state of infancy, not in a state of old age, but in a state of perfect manhood, just as Adam came forth from the hands of his Maker. But, according to St. Augustine, the martyrs will rise with the scars of the wounds they received for Christ, and they will be to them a glory and a triumph.

When the end of the world shall have come, the angels will sound the trumpet to the four ends of the world, and will call the dead to rise, and to appear before the judgment seat of God. Instantly, obedient to the voice of heaven, all the bodies that sleep in the dust shall rise as a man whom one wakes up after a long sleep; the bowels of the earth and the depths of the seas will give up the bodies of all men; in an instant all their bones and flesh will be joined together, and the soul of each descended from heaven, or come forth from hell

or purgatory, will be united to the body which it had animated in this world, never more to be separated from it.

How can such a wonder take place? Nothing is impossible with God. If with one word He could draw the world and all creatures out of nothing, why should He not be able to draw forth the dead from the graves and restore them to life? *You asked me*, said St. Paul to the infidels of his time, *how do the dead rise again. . . . Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first* (I. Cor. xv. 35–36). It is thus that God will raise you to life again whenever He wishes and in the manner He wishes, and it will not be more difficult for Him to gather the different parts of your body at the end of the world, than it was for Him to create the world out of nothing.

Do you desire to know the reason why God wishes to raise our body to life again? It is to make it partake of the eternal happiness or unhappiness of which the soul will already be in possession. As upon earth, the body shares after its own manner in all the good the soul does, in all the good works and in all the virtues it practices, it is but just that it should also partake in its rewards. So, also, as it is an accomplice in all the evil that the soul does, and in all its vices, it must also share in its chastisements and torments.

III. Therefore, we all shall rise again one day,—all, great and small, rich and poor, saints and sinners. In whatever condition Providence permitted us to be born, we shall rise again with the same flesh in which we are clothed, with the same eyes, hands, and members we have now. But shall we rise again in the same manner and in the same state? No, my brethren, as much as the lot of the just and of sinners will be different in eternity, so much will their resurrection be different. The bodies of the just like the body of Jesus Christ risen from the dead, will have four glorious qualities: impassibility, agility, subtility, and brightness.

1. *Impassibility.*—There will be no more of those alterations of sickness and health, of heat or cold, for the bodies of the just; no more hunger or thirst, no more fatigue, no more corruption, no death; but on the contrary, a continual state of pure pleasure and sweet enjoyment: *It shall rise in incorruption* (I. Cor. xv. 42).

2. *Agility.*—Instead of that vulgar mass which we drag along so painfully during the sad days of our mortality, the elect will have a body of extreme agility, that will permit them to transport themselves

from one place to another with the rapidity of lightning and without pain and without effort: *It shall rise in power* (I. Cor. xv. 43).

3. *Subtility.*— That earthly flesh which now serves us as a covering, will be, in some sort, spiritualized. But it will still be flesh, says St. Augustine, and not a spirit. But in preserving its nature, it will have acquired such properties, that no material obstacle will be able to stop it. It will be able to penetrate the hardest and most compact bodies, without breaking them, just as the light passes through glass. It was thus that our Saviour, after His resurrection, entered the Cenacle, although the doors were closed: *It shall rise a spiritual body* (I. Cor. xv. 44).

4. *Brightness.*—The bodies of the just will be brilliant like the sun: *Then shall the just shine as the sun* (Matt. xiii. 43); just as the adorable body of Jesus Christ in His transfiguration on Mount Thabor. But the splendor of the glorious bodies will be greater or less, according to the degree of their virtues and merits. The sun has his brightness, the moon has hers, and the stars have theirs; so, also, the bodies of the blessed will differ in brightness according as they are elevated in glory: *It shall rise in glory* (I. Cor. xv. 43).

Such are the ravishing qualities of the bodies of the blessed. But how different will be the bodies of the damned! While the bodies of the saints will be resplendent with glory and full of agility and power, exempt from all pain and infirmity; the bodies of the damned, on the contrary, plunged in a dungeon of horror and darkness, overwhelmed with shame and ignominy, will have to suffer unspeakable torments during all eternity. What a subject for reflection!

Consider those youths, once proud of their bodies, who were so careful of their bodily charms, so afraid of spoiling their beauty by a day of fast or by an act of mortification! Look at the bodies of those who fattened in delights and who lived in effeminacy and pleasures! O, what a stench! What a horrible sight! What hideous monsters! They enjoyed the false pleasures and the transitory happiness of the world, and now they are deprived forever of the sovereign good and of supreme felicity! They shunned even the slightest sacrifices, the smallest privations which religion imposes upon us, and now they are condemned to unspeakable humiliations and sufferings, and that forever.

IV. We all shall rise again, some to eternal happiness, others to endless suffering. If we are of the number of the elect, what a joy

to see ourselves associated with all the blessed, and to enjoy the sight of God, and to celebrate His praises! But if we are of the number of the damned, what a gloomy despair to behold ourselves thrown, body and soul, into the fire of hell for all eternity!

My brethren, what fruits should we derive from this great truth? First, a great zeal in regulating our conduct, so as to keep ourselves always in the state of grace, for fear of being surprised by death. "I shall rise one day," we should say to ourselves, "but in what state shall I rise?" If I were to die at this moment, would I join the number of the elect? Or would I be damned? And death may surprise me at any moment. Do we not hear of sudden deaths every day?

A second fruit which we should derive from the hope of a future resurrection, is that we have in this truth a great subject of consolation in the afflictions of life. Indeed, what can be better calculated to sweeten our pains, and to calm our griefs here below, than that certitude which we have that they will end one day, and that our body, so frail and suffering here on earth, will rise again to enjoy a happiness all the greater the more we will have suffered for Jesus Christ. *In all things we suffer tribulations*, says St. Paul, *but we are not distressed; we are straitened, but we are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but we are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not. . . . Knowing that He who raised up Jesus will raise us up also with Jesus* (II. Cor. iv. 8, 14). It was this same thought that upheld the martyrs in their torments, and the anchorites in the wilds of the desert, and which still, every day, upholds and encourages so many just and afflicted souls who would otherwise succumb under the weight of their sufferings.

Let us often reflect seriously on the general resurrection. This salutary thought will detach us from the world and its vain pleasures, it will strengthen us against our passions and against the temptations of the world; it will assist you to practice virtue and the good works which religion commands us, and thus, by making us live the life of Jesus Christ on earth, it will make us partakers of His glory in heaven. Amen.

## XXV. INSTRUCTION

### Twelfth Article of the Creed

*I Believe in Life Everlasting*

We have come to the last article of the Creed, which treats of eternal life. This article is placed the last, because all the others refer to it. God created us, redeemed us, and instituted the sacraments and all the other means of salvation, only to lead us to eternal life. Is there a future life? And if there is, what is the nature of this future life? Oh, the folly of men who do not think of a future life! Behold the subject of the instruction for to-day.

I. When I speak of a future life, I do not need to tell you that there is question of a life which will succeed the present one and in which God's justice will reward virtue and punish vice. To convince you of the existence of a future life I need only ask the following questions: Is there a God? For if there is a God, He must distinguish between vice and virtue, between man as a sinner and a saint; He must reward the good and punish the wicked, in proportion to their merits. Where would be the justice of God, where would be His wisdom, if everybody were permitted to live according to his own caprices; if theft, homicide, and adultery were so many indifferent acts in the sight of God, and if we had to fear neither punishment for our faults, nor reward for our virtues?

But do we see any just retribution in this world? On the contrary, does it not mostly happen that the holiest souls, the most charitable and the most edifying men, groan under the weight of misery and are oppressed with infirmities, persecutions, and ignomy, whilst the wicked, the impious, and the debauched live in pleasures and abundance, are raised to honors, and enjoy a consideration which they never have merited. Surely it is not in this world that virture is rewarded and vice punished, as they deserve; and so there must be, therefore, another world where justice is meted out. The evidence of this truth is so apparent that it has been acknowleged at all times and in all nations. "Go back," says the famous Massillon, "to the beginning of the world; travel over the whole earth; read the history of kingdoms and empires; listen to those that come from the remotest

lands; the immortality of the soul, the dogma of a future life has always been, as it is still, the belief of all the nations of the earth. Catholics and heretics, Christians and infidels, Jews and pagans, even the most savage tribes, witness to the truth of a future life." Now, a belief so universal and unanimous is surely an incontrovertible proof of the reality of a future life; and could God, who is wisdom itself, have left all men in error at all times?

But a still more convincing proof, and one which cannot leave any doubt in a Catholic soul, is the revelation which God Himself was pleased to make in the Sacred Books, and through the teaching of the Church. I shall not quote all these oracles; suffice it to recall to your mind the words of the prophet Daniel who teaches us that *those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, to see it forever* (Dan. XII. 2). And the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who, on the day of judgment, will turn to those at His right and say to them: *Come, ye blessed of my father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;* and then, addressing those at His left: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* And then adds the Gospel, *the one will go into everlasting punishment, and the others into everlasting life* (Matt. XXV. 34–36).

You see, my brethren, that according to these texts and many others which I could quote, the dogma of another life could not be revealed to us in a plainer manner. The Fathers of the Church and all tradition have always been one in teaching this great truth. We make profession of this faith every time we recite the Apostles' Creed, and say, "I believe in life everlasting."

It is an article of faith, that after this life there will be another one in which each one will be rewarded or punished according as he deserves. We cannot doubt this truth any more than we can doubt the existence of God Himself, or any other truth of religion. This truth serves as foundation to the whole edifice of faith, and being the only sanction of the law, we would have to reject the entire Gospel and repudiate our quality as Christians, if we would refuse to believe it; and not only would we be Christians no longer, but we would be worse than pagans, because there was never any religion in the world which did not teach the truth of a future life, nor was there ever a people that did not believe in it.

II. But what will this future life be? The life to come must be considered under a double aspect, as the reward of the good and as the punishment of the wicked. The place where the just will receive their reward is called heaven; the place where the wicked will suffer their punishment is called hell. Now, two things will constitute the happiness of the blessed in heaven; exemption from all evil, and the enjoyment of every good; as, on the other hand, for the damned, it will be the privation of every good and the combination of every evil that will constitute their eternal punishment.

In heaven there will be no more sickness, no more infirmities, no more pains; suffering, sadness, and sorrow will be banished forever; there will be no more troubles and anxieties, no more temptations, no evil of any kind: *And God will wipe away all tears* (Apoc. xxi. 4). In heaven the elect will enjoy all the happiness they can possibly desire, because God Himself will be their reward. *I am thy reward exceedingly great* (Gen. xv. 1). The apostle St. Paul, desirous of giving us an idea of the happiness of heaven, was unable to find suitable words, and he limits himself to telling us *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* (I. Cor. ii. 9). "In heaven," says St. Augustine, "we shall see God, and in seeing Him we shall love Him; and in loving Him we shall bless Him." *In heaven, we shall see God, not in a mystery and through the shadows of faith, as upon earth, but face to face and such as He is* (John iii. 2); that is, in all His perfections and in all His infinite loveliness. And in seeing God, we shall see at the same time the whole heavenly court. We shall see the Blessed Virgin, sitting on a throne of glory, inferior indeed to God, but above all that is not God. We shall see that numberless multitude of blessed spirits, glorious as the sun. The sight of so many wonders will plunge us into such an ecstasy of love and joy that our hearts will be fully satisfied: *I shall be satisfied when the glory shall appear* (Ps. xvi. 15). And in this sweet inebriation of ineffable happiness we shall break out into sublime canticles of blessing and thanksgiving, and we shall intone that eternal *Alleluia* and that eternal *Amen* with which the vaults of heaven are continually resounding.

But in the same degree as the happiness of the saints in heaven is great and ravishing, so the lot of the damned in hell is frightful and desperate. The privation of God and of heaven which they have lost

through their own fault; the pain of fire, according to the common opinion of the Doctors of the Church, and of a fire which will burn continually without consuming them, and so fiercely that all the fires of the earth are as nothing in comparison with it; such are, in a few words, the torments of hell.

III. What will be the duration of this future life, of this life of happiness or of torments? It will be eternal: *I believe in life everlasting.* The eternity of the life that awaits us is an incontestable truth of the Christian faith. The divine oracles do not leave room for any doubt: *And these shall go into everlasting punishment* (Matt. xxv. 46). I am well aware that many infidels have protested against this eternity of hell. But such is the teaching of faith, and unless we reject the entire Gospel, we cannot reject this truth. "But," you may say, "how can a crime of a moment be punished with an eternity of torments?" But is the punishment of a crime measured by its duration? The punishment is measured by the nature and enormity of the crime. Human justice condemns criminals to death and to hard labor for life for a crime of a moment. "But," you may ask, "what becomes of God's goodness and mercy?" But let me ask you in my turn, what would become of His wisdom and of His justice, if the punishment of the wicked were not equal to the reward of the just; if vices and passions were not checked through the fear of an eternal punishment? God is good, undoubtedly, and He shows His goodness by the numberless graces with which He overwhelms us every day. But because He is good, must He cease to punish miserable sinners who died in their sin and who cursed His goodness? And if the damned in hell are eternally cursing God, who created and redeemed them at the price of His blood, must not the same God also eternally punish them? Cannot a God, who is infinitely good, place us in the alternative either to merit by our virtues an eternal happiness or to draw upon us, by our sins, everlasting torments? Besides, my brethren, who are we that aspire thus to regulate the wisdom and justice of God? Who are we that pretend to understand the whole extent of the malice contained in mortal sin, and of the outrage which it commits against the Supreme Majesty? If it needed the blood of a God-man to expiate upon the cross the sins of men, is an eternity of torments too much to punish it as it deserves? Be this as it may, God has spoken, the Church teaches, and all tradition affirms this truth. Such is, therefore, our

faith, and whatever our proud reason may maintain, we must submit; the cause is judged.

There is an eternity! And what will this eternity be? Ah, my brethren, who can conceive a correct idea of eternity? In this world we can compare the most dissimilar things to one another, because there is always some analogy, some resemblance that admits of a comparison. Thus, I can compare a drop of water to the most extensive sea, because the sea, however extensive it may be, is, however, only a composition of drops of water; thus, I can compare a grain of sand to the earth, because the earth is only a composition of grains of sand. But there is nothing in this world that we can compare to eternity. Time has no relation with it, because eternity is no succession of centuries, or of years, or of moments. You might make all kinds of suppositions and calculations, but never would you arrive at an understanding of what eternity is. Suppose you had passed in heaven or in hell as many millions of centuries as there are leaves on the trees in spring, or grains of sand upon earth, or stars in the firmament, you would scarcely have commenced eternity. Imagine for a moment, that an ant would come once every thousand years and carry to the sea all the sand on the shore, bringing one grain every time. Since the beginning of the world, it would have removed only six or seven grains. Still the time would come when all the sand would be removed, and even the mountains and rocks could be carried away, grain by grain,—and thousands of worlds like this could be carried off in the same manner,—but eternity would hardly have commenced. Eternity is an abyss which has neither bottom, nor shores, it is like a circle, never commencing and never ending. I transport myself in spirit to heaven, and at the sight of those torrents of delight with which the elect are deluged, I ask them how long their joy and happiness will last? And they answer me: "Forever and forever." I descend in spirit into hell, and at the sight of that ocean of flames, where so many thousands of victims are burning, I ask them how long those torments and that despair will last? And they answer me: "Forever and forever."

IV. Such is, my brethren, the teaching of faith in regard to the next world. Is there a truth more consoling, and at the same time more frightful? Is there one more worthy of serious meditation? But alas! who is there that thinks seriously of eternity? People think continually of the affairs, of the pleasures, of the goods, and of the

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vanities of this world, and hardly find a moment to think of eternity. It is hard to understand this apathy and indifference on a subject so important. Even were it doubtful whether there is an eternity or not, would not prudence require us to prepare for it? But if we have faith, and believe that there is a happy eternity for the good, and an unhappy eternity for the wicked, is it not an unpardonable rashness, an unpardonable folly, not to think about it? Oh, sinners (for sinners alone are capable of such blindness), you believe that there is a hell, and you do nothing to avoid it! You believe that there is a heaven, and you do everything to lose it! You sleep on the very brink of a precipice. You do not realize that death may surprise you at any instant, that at any moment you might be hurried off into eternity. What folly! What rashness! But I know the cause of such deplorable forgetfulness. The passions of the heart, ill-gotten goods, human respect, and criminal relations, . . . such are some of the things that blind you. But what good will all these do you, if you lose your soul? Can you not make some sacrifices when there is question of saving your immortal soul, and of escaping eternal punishment?

My brethren, I implore you, think about eternity, and act as you would have wished to have acted on the day of your death. That day is, perhaps, nearer than you believe; if you were sure to die on this very day, or during this night, what would you not do to prepare yourselves? Therefore, let us do now what we would wish to have done then; let us keep ourselves always ready. In this way death will never surprise us, and we will merit to find grace at the judgment seat of God, and be admitted to a happy eternity, which I wish to you all. Amen.

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## XXVI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Four Last Ends of Man

The four last ends of man are Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. In the last instruction we have sufficiently spoken of heaven and hell. The eleventh instruction was devoted to the last judgment.

There remains for us, therefore, to speak only on the first of these ends, which is death. The thought of death, the necessity of preparing for death, and the manner of preparing for it — these will form the three heads of my instruction.

I. We must all die. The sentence has been passed from the beginning of the world, and we all know with what rigor it has always been executed: *It is appointed unto man once to die* (Heb. IX. 27).

If you wish to be penetrated with the salutary thought of death, you need only glance at the sad spectacle of this world, and ask yourselves what has become of all the many generations that have lived before us. What has become of the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Law; of the apostles and doctors of the New Law? What has become of the proud kings, the famous conquerors, of the men illustrious for their learning, who once filled the earth with their fame, and whose memory history has preserved to us? What has become of our ancestors, and even of many persons whom we have known in life, whom we visited and loved, but whom we see no longer? Ah! they were once what we are to-day upon earth; like ourselves they gave themselves to agriculture, to commerce, and to arts, but their last hour sounded, the sovereign judge called them before His dread tribunal, and they died: *It is appointed unto man once to die.*

We must die! All nature unceasingly preaches the thought of death. The sun which rises and sets, the rivers which flow on forever to the sea, the trees which winter robs of their leaves, the flowers which bloom in the morning and in the evening fade away; all creatures that rise and disappear, all tell us that thus we shall live and die, that we are only simple travelers upon earth, and that each passing day is a step nearer to the tomb: *It is appointed unto man once to die.*

We must die! And, my brethren, do we not find, even in ourselves, foreshadowings of death? Our strength decreases, our mind becomes weaker every day, our body is consumed little by little, illnesses and infirmities oppress us, and all this is not for us *an answer of death?* as St. Peter says. Dost not all this announce to us that we must die? *It is appointed unto man once to die.*

We must die! Does not the tolling of the funeral bell remind us of death? Do not the daily funeral processions remind us of our own end? The name of the dead that you hear read every Sunday, the

mourning dress that people wear — all remind you of death: *It is appointed unto man once to die.*

Let us think of death, and think of it often. Is there a thought that is more salutary; is there one that contains so many grave and solemn teachings on the frailty, vanity, and nothingness of things here below? How can we attach ourselves to the perishable goods of this world when we remember that we must quit them in a very short time, and leave them, perhaps, to ungrateful heirs, who will hardly think of us, and who will squander in a few years, in luxury and debauchery, the fruit of our lifelong labor and economy? How can a person attend dances, plays, and vain pleasures of this world, while he remembers that death is ever at our heels? Does a condemned criminal laugh and joke on his way to the gallows? O, death, how good and salutary is the remembrance of thee! *O, death, thy sentence is welcome to the man that is in need* (Eccl. XLI. 3).

II. But it is not sufficient to meditate on death, we must also seriously prepare for it. Time is fleeting, the hour of death is uncertain, and the consequences of death are all-important.

1st. *Time is fleeting.* *Indeed*, says St. James, *what is the life of man upon earth? It is a vapor which appeareth for a little while and afterwards shall vanish away* (James IV. 15). It is a torrent, says the prophet, a cloud, a wind, a shadow, which pass without leaving behind the least trace. *I feel*, says St. Paul, *that my years pass away, that my life is gliding by, that the time of my dissolution approaches, and that each day removes something from my frail existence* (I. Cor. XV. 31). And, indeed, hardly are we born than we commence to die. Death gains upon us every moment, and as many days and years as we have lived, so many days and years are we nearer death. How must we not wonder at people when we hear them counting the number of their years. I am twenty years old, says one; I am thirty, says an other. O, foolish man, says a pagan philosopher, these years are not yours; it is death that has robbed you of them. And the number of the few years that are still left to you to pass upon earth will soon have passed away like a dream. For it is written that *there is only one step between life and death* (I. Ki. XX. 3).

But if death is so near, is it not time for us to prepare for it? And are a few years, or a few days too much, when there is question

of earning an eternity of happiness, or of avoiding an eternity of misfortune?

2d. A still more powerful motive is the uncertainty of death. When shall we die? Shall it be in a few years or in a few days? We do not know. Shall it be suddenly, or after a long illness? We do not know. Shall it be in youth, or in full manhood, or in a ripe age? Shall it be at home, in our bed, or among relatives and friends, or in the street, or far from home, without assistance? We do not know. Shall there be a priest at our bedside with all the consolations of religion, or shall we die without confession, without any sacrament? Shall we die in the state of grace, or in sin, under the curse of God's anger, or in the peace of the Lord? Shall ours be the death of the just, or the death of the damned? We do not know.

But what we do know is that death will surprise us when we least think of it. We may die at any age. Youth is no more secure than old age against the surprises of death. Sudden deaths are very common. Every day we hear of some one being dead, of some one who is dying. This one was struck with apoplexy, that one was killed by lightning; one was drowned, another was burned to death.

3d. The most powerful motive to induce us to prepare for death is the consideration of the terrible consequences of the hour of death. We must leave everything: goods, riches, pleasures, relations, and friends. Our body will fall into corruption and dust. Look into a coffin and contemplate the hideous spectacle! Oh, youth and maidens so infatuated with your beauty, see what will become of you! Libertines, misers, debauchees, and drunkards, look at what awaits you!

If all were over at death, if there were nothing beyond the grave, then we would not need to be afraid at the thought of death; but what will become of our immortal soul? At present we do not know; but at death the veil will be raised, the cloud will disappear, and our last hour will decide for us an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery. On whatever side the tree shall fall there it shall remain. The bed on which you will die will be the first tribunal where you will be judged. There is no interval between death and judgment, nor between judgment and eternity. In the morning we hear that some one is dying, and in the evening we are told that he is dead; this means that his fate has been settled for all eternity, that he has been judged on a life like our own, that is, on a life of zeal, or a life of indifference, on a life of crimes or of virtues; judged by a just and

inexorable God, who knows all and pardons nothing; finally, judged forever and without appeal — judged for all eternity.

Oh, God! how terrible is this last moment! Oh, death, how can we think of thee, without thinking at the same time of penance? No one, my brethren, who has faith, can seriously consider this supreme moment without resolving to lead a better life.

III. These are the three great motives that should lead us to prepare for death: The shortness of life, the uncertainty of the hour of death, and the terrible consequences of death. But let us also consider the manner of preparing for death.

1st. Before all, my brethren, you must renounce sin and all the occasions of sin; for without this first disposition, all the others would be useless. And you must do so without delay, because the least delay might put you in danger of being lost forever. You may have ill-gotten goods to restore, you may have to be reconciled to an enemy, you may have to break off some evil habit. Is it not folly to persevere in evil, when you know that life is so short and so uncertain, and when a sudden and unforeseen accident might cast you into eternal misery?

2d. You must do penance for your sins. St. Ambrose says, that to have sinned once is sufficient reason for continual penance. What, then, should he do whose whole life has been one long chain of sins?

3d. You must make a good use of the time God gives you. Alas! life is so short! What remorse will be yours at death if you find yourselves with empty hands; if you have no good works to offer to the Sovereign Judge! On the other hand, what a consolation if, like the good servant in the Gospel, we can say: Lord, Thou hast entrusted to me five talents; behold, I have gained with them five more. As long as we have time, let us try to do good: *Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men* (Gal. VI. 10). Let us attach ourselves to the service of God, let us rigorously embrace the practice of virtue; let us combat our passions and vices; in a word, let us prepare ourselves now as we would like to be prepared at the supreme hour of death.

4th. You should often think of death. The Holy Ghost teaches us that there is no more useful and more salutary thought, no thought more suitable to turn us away from sin: *In all thy works, remember the last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Eccl. VII. 40). It is an excellent practice to choose every month, or at least every year, a day of

retreat to prepare one's self for death. Go to confession and communion on that day, recite the office of the dead, or the prayers for the dying, meditate seriously on the four last ends of man, recommend yourself earnestly to the Blessed Virgin, to your guardian angel, and your patron saint, begging them to obtain for you the grace of a happy death.

But you should not be satisfied with thinking of death once in a while. You should think of it every morning on rising, by imagining that the present day will perhaps be the last for you. You should think of it in the evening on going to bed, by representing to yourselves that perhaps the sheets in which you are going to sleep may be your winding-sheet to carry you to the grave. You should think of it at the beginning of your principal actions, by asking yourselves the question which St. Bernard often asked himself: "If thou shouldst die at this moment, what wouldst thou do? In what manner wouldst thou do it?" You should think of it when the clock strikes the passing of another hour; you should think of it when you are ill and suffering.

5th. The affairs of your soul are, undoubtedly, the most important. But in occupying yourselves with your eternal interests, do not forget your temporal affairs. Make your will, and do not wait, as it too often happens, until you are dangerously sick, until the last moment; for, besides the danger of not making it at all, a sick man is often not in the right frame of mind to understand what he is doing, and he is often unable to make his will as it suits him, because he may be unduly influenced by greedy friends and relatives. In the distribution of your goods, think also of yourself, remember the poor, and remember the Church, if your means allow you; for perhaps it is the only advantage which you will derive, after your death, from the goods which you have so painfully acquired.

These, my brethren, are the different means of preparing yourselves for death. The most important of all is to think often about it, and to keep yourselves always in the state of grace, for fear of being surprised by death. But if God is pleased to admonish you by some serious illness, you should hasten to prepare yourselves in a more immediate manner. Penetrate yourselves more and more with sentiments of contrition, charity, and resignation, which the Lord demands from you. Do not be afraid to call the priest as soon as possible to hear your confession and to administer the last sacraments, while you

are still in possession of your faculties. Do not look with too much security on God's judgment, or on the abyss of eternity which lies open before you; but have a wholesome fear of God's justice. To revive your confidence, look at the Crucifix. You can hope everything from a God who died for you upon a cross. And when your hour has come, invoke anew the holy name of Jesus, give up your soul into His hands; thus you will merit to die a good and holy death. You will leave this life of misery and afflictions, and go into eternal happiness. May God grant you this grace. Amen.

# SECOND PART

## ON HOPE AND PRAYER

### I. INSTRUCTION

#### On Hope

I.

Hope, which is the second of the three theological virtues, is a gift of God by which we expect, with a firm confidence, the goods which God has promised us.

We say: 1st. That it is a gift of God: for it is with hope as with faith; God must give it to us; we cannot acquire it by our own power; we can only ask for it, and then strengthen it by frequent acts.

2d. That hope makes us expect the goods *which God has promised us:* that is, heaven and the rewards of eternity, heaven and the necessary means to obtain it; but not the goods of this world, such as health, honors, riches, for God has not promised these to us.

II. Is hope necessary for salvation? Yes, my brethren; for to arrive at God, says St. Paul, one must first believe that He exists, and then that He rewards those that seek Him. Faith is the first and most necessary virtue, and the foundation of all the others. But hope must arise from faith and cannot exist without it. Faith is the root of the tree, hope is the stem, and charity the fruit.

III. On what motives is this great virtue founded? It is founded on the promise of God, who cannot deceive us, on His almighty power, on His infinite mercy, and on the merits of Jesus Christ. Can there be a stronger foundation?

1st. *On the Promise of God.*—God often repeated these promises through the mouth of His prophets and His own Son that He would give eternal life to those who should merit it, and also all the graces necessary for this end: *The Lord will give grace and glory* (Ps.

LXXXIII. 12): *The just go into everlasting life* (Matt. XXV. 42). These are unchangeable and infallible promises; for it is written that *heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of God shall not pass* (Matt. XXIV. 35); and promises which have been confirmed by an oath, as St. Paul says (Hebr. VI. 17), in order, we might say, to render them more sacred and inviolate.

2d. *On His Almighty Power.*—God in His infinite power commands and all obey. He needs only to will and everything is accomplished. What can oppose His sovereign will? It is not with God as with us. We often promise something without being able to keep our word, because our will is unsteady and changeable, and because being weak and dependent creatures, we are often powerless to control things and to do what we have promised.

3d. *On His Infinite Goodness.*—In God all perfections are infinite; one cannot be greater than the other. But if there could be a difference between them, undoubtedly His goodness would be greater than all His other attributes. *His tender mercies are over all His works* (Ps. CXLIV). God has created us, and does a creator not love the work of his hand? He is our Father, the best of all fathers, and is not a father fond of his children? He is our Redeemer, and if He dies for us, must not His charity and mercy towards us be infinite? Could He have given us a greater proof of His love? *Greater love than this no man hath, than a man lay down his life for his friends* (John XV. 13).

4th. *On the Merits of Jesus Christ.*—This motive is still more powerful than the others, for here is a question not only of mercy and of promises, but of a right actually acquired. Our Saviour, by dying for us, has opened for us the treasures of grace, and it only remains for us to draw them; He has opened to us the gates of heaven, and it only remains for us to enter. Through the merits of His blood and passion, He has paid our debts; He has restored to us all our rights to the heavenly inheritance. Whatever may be the rigor and extent of divine justice, God cannot henceforth refuse heaven to us as long as we place no obstacle in the way. It was especially by the remembrance of the merits of Jesus Christ that St. Bernard animated his hope: "I am not worthy," he says, "of the graces of my God; but Jesus Christ has merited them for me, and I can look upon heaven as a thing that belongs to me, through the right which my Saviour has given to me."

Such are the solid motives upon which our hope is founded. What more can we desire? Unless we have no faith, which God forbid, could we refuse to put all our confidence in Him?

IV. What are the qualities which our hope must have? It should have the three following: It must be firm; it must be accompanied with a mistrust of ourselves, and it must be joined to good works.

1st. It must be *firm*, firm as the anchor thrown into the depth of the sea, according to the expression of St. Paul: *Which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm* (Hebr. VI. 19). And nothing in the world, not poverty, not illness, not temptations, not persecutions, not trials of any kind, ought to be able to shake our hope. *I know*, says the apostle, *whom I have believed, and I am certain that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day* (II. Tim. I. 12). Ye sinners that listen to me, whatever may be the number and greatness of your sins, whatever may be the violence of your passions, do not be discouraged; for God will never permit you to be tempted above your strength, and His mercy is greater than your wickedness. You souls that are afflicted, desolate, persecuted, and oppressed with reverses of fortune, ever hope in your Heavenly Father because if He afflicts you in this world, it is only to reward you the more in the other.

2d. Though our hope must be firm, it ought also to be mingled with a mistrust of ourselves. Though we can hope everything from God's goodness, we should be fearful of ourselves, on account of our inconstancy and weakness. Without this salutary fear, hope would be a mere presumption. This is why the Holy Ghost recommends us to *work out our salvation in fear and trembling* (Phil. II. 12); and, when we stand, *to take heed lest we fall* (I. Cor. X. 12). For, alas! human frailty is so great, and the enemies that surround us are ever plotting our ruin. Full confidence in God, but great distrust of ourselves, such is the essential character of hope.

3d. Finally, our hope must *be accompanied by good works*. God, who has created us without our coöperation, says St. Augustine, will not save us without our coöperation. Read the Gospel and you will find what God requires of us to merit heaven; you will see that the way to heaven is rough and the gate is narrow; you will find the commandments we have to observe, the virtues we have to practice, the sacrifices we have to make. Oh! how blind and insensible are

those who hope to enter heaven without imposing upon themselves the least constraint and inconvenience! No, my brethren, it is with hope as with faith; without good works it is vain, it is sterile and deceptive, and it serves only to render us more guilty, on account of the abuse we make of grace.

V. May your hope be clothed with this threefold quality we have just explained, and then it will produce in you the most salutary effects. It will console you in your pains, it will sustain you in temptations, it will assist you to detach yourselves from the things of this life, and will constantly encourage you in the service of God and in practice of all Christian virtues. Let us say a few words on the advantages of hope.

1st. *Hope Consoles Us in Our Sufferings.*—The trials which God sends us in this world are often great. . . . But if you have hope you will not be downcast, because you will remember that if you accept these afflictions with a humble submission you will merit a great reward, and as many acts of patience as you will make in the midst of your tribulations so many pearls will you add to your heavenly crown. St. Paul, in his sufferings, said: *I suffer, but I am not ashamed* (II. Tim. 1. 12). Consider the holy man Job in the midst of his trials. What was it that consoled him? It was the hope of a future life. *I know that my Redeemer liveth* (Job XIX. 25). Not only does hope aid us in bearing the crosses and afflictions of life, but it makes us find sweetness and joy in them, because of the resemblance they give us to Jesus Christ crucified, and of the increase of glory they merit for us. One day St. Francis of Assisi was asked how he could support his pains with so much cheerfulness, and he answered: "Because the reward which I expect is so great that all these pains and crosses appear a pleasure to me."

2d. *Hope Sustains Us in Temptations.*—*God is my light and my salvation*, said the royal prophet. *He is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid?* (Ps. XXVI. 1.) Let the passions, let the devil, let hell unchain itself against you. The thought of heaven will be sufficient to gain the victory. *Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Eccl. VII. 40). In trouble and agitation remember eternity; ask yourselves whether for a moment of pleasure you should expose yourselves to lose heaven and to deserve hell, and this sole consideration will quench the fire that is burning within you, and you will come forth triumphant from the most violent combats.

3d. *Hope Detaches Us from the Present Life.*—What attachment can we have for a life which lasts for so short a time and in which we are exposed to so many miseries? Does the prisoner love his dungeon or the pilot love the stormy sea in which he has nearly been shipwrecked? *Unhappy that I am*, says St. Paul, *who will deliver me from the body of this death?* (Rom. VII. 24.) *Oh*, cried out David, *when shall I appear before the face of God? As the heart panteth after the fountain of water, so doth my soul pant after thee, Oh, God!* (Ps. XLI.) These are the sentiments with which we ought to be penetrated when we are filled with hope.

4th. Finally, *Hope Reanimates and Encourages Us in the Love and Service of God.* If the hope of a temporal and uncertain gain inspires merchants with such zeal and constancy in the fatigue and embarrassments of their commerce, if the hope of worldly glory can encourage soldiers in the dangers of war, what zeal and courage should we not exhibit for the immortal crown! O, sweet and amiable hope, what are all the sacrifices thou askest of us in comparison with the ineffable goods thou hast promised! Ah! I understand the courage that enabled the martyrs to defy torments, and the anchorites to bury themselves alive, so to say, in the wilds of the deserts, and which still moves so many missionaries to stifle the voice of flesh and blood and to brave all kinds of privations and fatigues, to spread the Gospel.

O, holy and strong virtue of hope, mayest thou always dwell in our souls! Mayest thou, together with faith and charity, thy inseparable companions, be always the motive of our thoughts, words, and actions; and mayest thou animate our sentiments during life, our last sigh at death, and mayest thou open for us the gates of eternal happiness! Amen.

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## II. INSTRUCTION

### On Prayer

I. Prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, by which we render Him the homage that is due to Him and ask Him for what we need.

Prayer is an *elevation of the soul to God*, because when you pray you must forget the things of this world, your affairs, your goods, and

your pleasures, and raise your minds and hearts to God, and occupy yourselves only with Him and with your salvation. In prayer *we render to God our homage and ask Him for the graces of which we stand in need*. Indeed, prayer has a double object: 1st. To offer to God the homage of respect, love, and gratitude we owe to Him; and 2d. To tell Him our needs and to solicit whatever is necessary for us, either for soul or body, for this life or the life to come.

II. There are two kinds of prayers: mental and vocal. Mental prayer is the prayer of the heart, and vocal prayer is the prayer of the lips and heart together. In mental prayer our soul alone entertains itself with God without words, and in vocal prayer we express by word of mouth the thoughts and sentiments with which our soul is penetrated. Mental prayer, also called *meditation*, may be very agreeable to God without the help of vocal prayer, because God who *searches the hearts and reins* (Ps. VII. 10) has no need of an exterior manifestation to know its affections; but vocal prayer, when it is not from the heart, is no prayer at all. It is an act of hypocrisy. Mental prayer cannot be too warmly recommended. It is through mental prayer that we learn to know God and to know ourselves; but we must not neglect vocal prayer, because our body, as well as our soul, is obliged to pray, and the edification of others often requires vocal prayer.

There are also ejaculatory prayers, short but effective aspirations of the mind and heart to God. Such are: *My God, I love Thee. My God, have pity on me. May God's will be done*, and other similar ejaculations. This manner of praying was in great use among the ancient hermits of Egypt, and all the masters of spiritual life advise us to practice it often, especially if our occupations do not allow of long prayers. We read in the life of St. Francis of Assisi that for weeks he said no other prayer but the beautiful words: *My God and my all.*

III. Is prayer necessary for salvation? Yes, prayer is absolutely necessary for salvation. Three principal reasons impose upon us the rigorous duty of prayer: 1st. The honor which we owe to God; 2d. The need which we have of grace, and 3d. The formal command of Jesus Christ.

1st. *The Honor which We Owe to God.*— God is our Creator, our Father, sovereign Lord and Master. Both faith and reason teach us that He created man only for His glory, and in order to have adorers

in spirit and truth. It is therefore the duty of every rational creature to render homage to God and to express to Him his respect, love, and gratitude. This duty we fulfill through prayer. Hence, it is an impiety, and a very criminal impiety, not to fulfill this duty, especially when one neglects prayer through affectation, indifference, or bad will. Those men also act criminally in the eyes of God who never pray or who pray without attention. They are worse than pagans, who at least adore their idols and invoke them and offer sacrifices to them.

2d. *The Need which We Have of Grace.*— It is an article of faith, that without grace we can do nothing for our salvation: *Without me you can do nothing* (John xv. 5). On the other hand, it is certain that prayer is absolutely necessary to obtain grace. Undoubtedly, God grants certain graces without our asking for them, such as vocation to the faith, as St. Augustine teaches us; for we cannot ask Him for something of which we do not know. But it is not the same, in the ordinary course of Providence, with the other graces necessary to do good and avoid evil. If we desire to obtain them, we must ask for them. It was this that our divine Saviour taught us, when He said *that if we seek we shall find, if we ask it shall be given to us, and if we knock it shall be opened to us* (Luke xi. 9). Undoubtedly, God knows our wants before we make them known to Him; but He has a right to require us to ask Him for His help. It is His will that we should make known to Him our pains and miseries, just as beggars show their poverty and nakedness when asking for alms; and often it is only under this condition that God deigns to grant us what we need.

3d. *The Precept of Prayer Given Us by Our Saviour.*—Nothing is more formal in holy Scripture: *Watch and pray* (Mark xiii. 33). *We must always pray* (Luke xviii. 1). And St. Paul: *Pray night and day* (I. Thess. ii. 10). *Pray without ceasing* (I. Thess. v. 17), etc. There is no question here of a mere counsel, but of a rigorous precept. *We must* . . . It is a real and indispensable duty which our divine Master wished to impose upon us, just as much as it is a duty to love God and to render justice to our fellow-men. The precept of prayer applies to everybody, to rich and to poor, to the learned and to the ignorant, to sinners, and to holy men. In order to impress upon us the necessity of prayer, our divine Saviour gave us the example in a most admirable manner; for although He was not obliged at

all to pray for Himself, He passed entire nights in prayer: *And he passed the whole night in the prayer of God* (Luke VI. 12).

Prayer is, therefore, an absolute necessity. It is to our soul, says St. John Chrysostom, what the nerves are to the body. As the body is without strength and life as soon as the nerves are destroyed, so, also, our soul cannot live the life of grace without prayer. "Prayer is to the soul," says the same holy doctor, "what the bulwarks are to a city, what weapons are to the soldier in battle." A city without bulwarks or soldiers without weapons cannot long withstand the enemy. So, also, without prayer we are powerless in the face of the enemies of our salvation.

IV. When should we pray? We must pray in the morning on rising and in the evening on going to bed. As soon as you awake, offer to God your heart and all the actions of the day. As soon as you are dressed kneel down and say your morning prayer. This is not a simple practice of piety but a real duty of conscience; we must consecrate to the Lord the first fruits of the day. To allege lack of time is an idle excuse and hardly worth answering. Have you not time for worldly amusements and pleasures? Can you not set aside some moments for prayer? Pray in the evening before going to bed. Kneel down and thank God for the graces and ask pardon for the sins of the day. Evening prayer answers to the sacrifice that used to be offered to God at the end of the day, just as morning prayer answers to the morning sacrifice of old. Both morning and evening prayer are excellent Christian practices to which faithful souls are inviolably attached. I would recommend to you the pious custom of reciting them together in the family. This union in prayer offers a holy violence to heaven and infallibly draws down God's graces upon the family, according to the promise of Jesus Christ: *Where there are two or three together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt. XVIII. 20).

We should also pray often during the day: at the beginning of our principal actions, to offer them to God; before and after meals; in reciting the *Angelus* morning, noon, and evening; in temptation, danger, illness, and affliction; and at the hour of death, to beseech God to receive us into the bosom of His mercy.

In a word, we must pray always and never cease to pray; but in what manner? In performing for God and in a spirit of penance all our daily actions, for even our most common actions become a

continual prayer, if we do them with this intention. How, again? By living continually in God's love and grace, and having no other desire than to please Him and to do His will in all things.

V. Lastly, what should we ask of God? We should ask Him, first, for spiritual goods, that is, the goods of grace for a happy eternity, because these are the principal objects of prayer. But we may also ask Him for temporal goods, such as health, good crops, cessation of a plague, success in our affairs, and other temporal favors. For, although God has not promised us temporal goods, still, like a kind and indulgent father, He is often pleased to grant them to us, provided we put no obstacle in the way of His gifts by our evil dispositions. But we must ask for temporal favors with an entire resignation to God's holy will and for a good purpose, for it is certain that if we should ask for health or wealth only to make a bad use of them, God who reads our hearts, who knows our most secret intentions, would not hear our prayer.

If, after good and fervent prayers, you do not obtain what you desire, you must not murmur against Providence. God always has His designs in the goods He refuses to us, and when He permits us to be afflicted either through sickness, or losses, or other adversities, He does it only for the good of our soul; either to punish us for crimes, or to detach us from this world, or finally to make us acquire more abundant merits for heaven.

V. Have you been faithful until the present, my brethren, to the indispensable duty of prayer? Are there not some among you whose conscience reproaches them? How many are there who never or very seldom pray, or who pray so badly that their prayers are rather sins than acts of virtue! O you, lukewarm and indifferent souls that listen to me, you hardened sinners who never pray, beware! For if you continue to refuse God the homage of respect, love, and gratitude which you owe Him, you are guilty of great impiety and of shameful ingratitude; and if you do not ask God for the graces you stand in need of, you will surely not obtain them; your passions and the devil will have full power over you, and your ruin will be inevitable. Yes, without prayer salvation is impossible. This is a truth upon which I cannot insist too much, because it appears not to be sufficiently understood, and because it is so easily forgotten.

Pray, therefore, whoever you may be, holy men or sinners, but you especially, sinners, pray and do not cease to pray. Pray in the

morning, pray in the evening, and let no pretext hinder you from doing so. The prophet David prayed seven times a day. Daniel, when a captive at Babylon, although the king had forbidden him under pain of death to pray publicly, continued to pray three times a day, opening the windows looking towards Jerusalem, until he was condemned to be thrown into the lions' den.

The saints always made prayer their principal occupation. Follow their example, pray for yourselves, and then pray for your families; pray for the conversion of sinners, pray for the souls in purgatory, for your benefactors and for the Church. If you pray as you ought to, God will hear your prayers, He will overwhelm you with the gifts you ask for others, and He will grant to you finally the reward which He has promised to His faithful. Amen.

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## III. INSTRUCTION

### On Prayer (*Cont'd*)

In the previous instruction I made you acquainted with the nature of prayer and its different species, and I proved the indispensable necessity of prayer, on account of the honor we owe to God, the need which we have of grace, and the formal precept which Jesus Christ has given us. But how must we pray? This will be the subject of the instruction of to-day. If our prayers are so often without effect, it is because we do not pray well, and because they are not accompanied with the necessary dispositions, for our Lord has given us His word that He will hear us, and He has promised to grant us everything what we ask His Father in His name. The apostle St. James says: *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss* (James iv. 3). What are, therefore, the dispositions with which we must pray? They are six in number: A good preparation, humility, attention, devotion, confidence, and perseverance.

1st. We must *prepare* for prayer. The Holy Ghost recommends to us to collect our mind and to turn to God before commencing to pray: *Before prayer prepare thy soul* (Eccl. xviii. 23). Indeed,

how can one expect to make his prayer well, if he commences it with a mind agitated by the affairs and pleasures of this world and a heart troubled by passions? Hence, before prayer we should collect ourselves for a few moments, invoke the assistance of the Holy Ghost, be penetrated with the presence of God, and resolved to avoid all distractions.

2d. We must pray with *humility*. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds* (Eccl. xxxv. 21). *God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble* (James iv. 6). Humility in prayer must be interior and exterior. What are we before God but miserable sinners unworthy of pardon, poor worms of the earth? If we had to appear before a prince of this world to ask him for some favor, with what respect would we appear before him? This interior humility, my brethren, must manifest itself exteriorly by a respectful attitude of the body, and by a modest deportment. In the first place, we should be kneeling, for however much we may humble ourselves we can never humble ourselves too much in the face of the supreme Majesty. The saints always prayed on their knees. Daniel prayed with his "face to the earth." David calls upon us to "prostrate ourselves before the Lord." St. Paul tells us that he prayed by bowing his knee: *I bow my knee* (Ephes. iii. 14). And you know in what manner our Lord prayed in the Garden of Olives, and the publican in the temple. We should pray with *our eyes cast down and the hands joined*. The thought of our baseness, the remembrance of our sins, suggests this humble behavior, and it is also the ordinary attitude of all pious and fervent persons. Oh, you Christians, full of lukewarmness and indifference, who are more sitting than kneeling, or who are half reclining in your seats, with your eyes wandering in every direction, and hardly folding your hands, how can you dare to pray thus to a God that sees you? Far from expecting His favor, you ought rather to be afraid of His wrath. But this pious attitude of body is to be understood only of the prayers of obligation, for when we have rendered to God the homage to which He has a right, and when we have paid to Him the tribute we owe to Him, we may, of course, pray sitting or standing, while laboring or traveling, while dressing in the morning, or in the evening when lying down; because these prayers, if otherwise well made, cannot be anything but good and meritorious.

3d. We must pray with *attention*. Prayer is an elevation of our soul to God. But how can our soul elevate itself to God if the mind

is occupied only with distracting thoughts, with the affairs and pleasures of the world? It is the want of attention that renders so many prayers useless. "How can God hear you," says St. John Chrysostom, "if you do not hear yourselves? How could He listen to a prayer in which you do not know what you are saying or doing?" Undoubtedly, it is not easy to keep free from all distractions; and we know the greatest saints were subject to them. But they must not be voluntary; you must reject them as soon as you notice them, you must not give occasion to them by keeping your eyes open to every thing about you, or by praying in places where you are too much exposed to dissipation. You must, on the contrary, retire to a secluded place: *When thou shalt pray enter into thy chamber* (Matt. vi. 6). You must guard against distractions beforehand by driving away from your mind all earthly preoccupation and by a firm and sincere resolution to pray well. If you take these precautions, your distractions will not be culpable and your prayer will be agreeable to God. But if you do not banish distractions; if you do not wish to impose upon yourselves the least inconvenience; if you content yourselves to pray with your lips, whilst your mind is occupied with other things, not only is your prayer worthless, but, on the contrary, you offend God and draw upon yourselves rather His wrath than His graces and favors.

4th. To the attention we must add *devotion;* that is, the love of God and the ardent desire to obtain what we ask. Is prayer only an empty sounding of words on the lips? No, it is a sentiment of the heart, a cry of the soul inspired by an ardent love. If you desire God to listen to you and hear your prayers, speak to Him in the affectionate and burning language of love. Just as incense rises into the air and spreads a sweet odor only when it is spread upon burning coals, so prayer cannot ascend into heaven except it is inflamed with the fire of love. O you lukewarm souls, souls obstinate in sin, do you pray with these sentiments? Perhaps you do not even know what you ask for in your prayers, and would, perhaps, be surprised and dissatisfied if God were to give you what you ask for; for example, the grace to correct yourselves of your evil habits, the grace to reconcile yourselves with your enemy, the grace to make restitution, or the grace of conversion. Your prayers are not prayers; they are only acts of hypocrisy and impiety.

5th. We must pray with *confidence.* To pray with confidence is to pray with a firm assurance that God will hear us. Such should be

the disposition of our soul. Why? Because God is a father full of tenderness and goodness, eagerly desirous of our salvation, and, moreover, He has promised to grant us all what we ask of Him. *Ask and you shall receive* (John xvi. 24). *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do* (John xvi. 13). In the lives of the saints we see striking proofs of God's mercy and love, and of the faithful fulfillment of His promise. Josue prays, and God stops the sun in its course; Moses prays, and God opens a passage in the Red Sea; Elias prays, and fire descends from heaven; the Ninivites pray, and they are spared. The apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins pray, and they raise the dead to life, heal the sick, and work the most astonishing miracles; they face the rage of tyrants and undergo with courage and serenity the most cruel death; they openly profess their faith and preserve themselves pure in the midst of the temptations of the world and the snares of hell. Ah! if we would but know to pray in this manner, how many graces would we obtain which we now lose by want of confidence!

6th. We must pray with *perseverance. We ought always to pray and not to faint* (Luke xviii. 1). God who is pleased to try our constancy, loves to be solicited, pressed, and importuned, if I may so speak. Although He appears sometimes to be deaf to our prayers, we may be sure that He hears them, and a time will come when we shall obtain what we asked for. Our Saviour Himself assures us of this when He says: *Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him: Friend, lend me three loaves, because a friend is come off his journey to me, and I have not what to set before him. And he from within should answer, and say: Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. Yet if he shall continue knocking, I say to you, although he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet, because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you* (Luke xi. 5–9). How consoling are these words!

Remember the parable of the Chanaanite woman. Although a stranger and of a cursed race, she asked our Lord to heal her daughter who was cruelly tormented by the devil. At first, Christ did not even deign to answer her. Then His disciples said to Him: *Lord, send her away, for she crieth after us.* And our Lord, affecting a severity, said: *I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house*

*of Israel.* The Chanaanite woman insists, and prostrates herself at His feet. *No*, said the Saviour, *it is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs.* The woman is far from becoming discouraged: *Yes, Lord*, she says, *for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. O woman*, cried out the Saviour, *great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt* (Matt. xv. 23–28). And her daughter was healed the same moment.

This is an admirable example of perseverance in prayer. God loves to try our faith and confidence, and ends by permitting Himself to be touched, and by granting to us all we ask. Therefore, let us be firm and constant in our prayers, for the moment we cease to pray might perhaps be the moment of grace.

Have you brought to prayer all the dispositions I have just enumerated? How many prayers are made with willful distractions, lukewarmness, and indifference, and rather through routine and custom than with a spirit of devotion and with that sentiment of obstinate confidence which does a holy violence to God! Let us humbly ask pardon of God, and let us take the firm and sincere resolution to say our prayers with all the care, all the attention, fervor, and love we are capable of.

In the last instruction we said that prayer is a duty, and such an indispensable duty that we cannot be saved without it. Can we fulfill this duty and obtain the graces of which we stand in need, if our prayer is not made in the right way? Therefore, let us pray with recollection and attention, with the sentiments of a lively piety and an humble and ardent confidence which never wearies. Amen.

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## IV. INSTRUCTION

### On the Lord's Prayer

I. As our divine Saviour often recommended prayer to His disciples, both by precept and example, His disciples said to Him one day: *Lord, teach us to pray* (Luke xi. 1). Our Saviour answered: *When you pray, say: Our Father who art in heaven.* . . . This prayer

is called the Lord's Prayer, because our Saviour Himself taught it to us. Of all the prayers that are recited in the Church, there can be none more beautiful and more excellent. Why? Because it has a God for author, and, short though it is, it contains in abridgment all that we have to ask of God, as the Apostles' Creed contains all that we must believe, and the Decalogue all that we must practice.

The Lord's Prayer is composed of a preface, seven petitions, and a conclusion. The preface consists of the words: *Our Father who art in heaven*, then follow the seven petitions, of which the first three have for their object our duties towards God, and the last four our own needs.

The conclusion consists of the word *Amen*, which means « So be it.» Since the Lord's Prayer is such an important prayer, and one which everybody ought to know and understand, I shall explain it in detail.

II. *Our Father who art in heaven. Our Father!* What a sweet and tender name! It is the first word we learned in our infancy, and it is the first cry of a child when in danger or in need. Our Lord could have taught us to say: « O Thou, who art our God, our sovereign master and who will be one day our judge.» But He wished to inspire us with the most tender confidence, because He knew well that confidence is the soul of prayer. Hence, the first words He puts upon our lips are: *Our Father.*

God is our Father: 1st. Because He has given us life and preserves it. Our parents were only the instruments of His providence. It was He that formed our members in our mother's womb, and who joined to our body a spiritual, intelligent, and rational soul. He also preserves our life through the nourishment He furnishes and through the safeguards with which He surrounds us. Perhaps we do not think of this; and nevertheless is it not God who gives us the air we breathe, the bread we eat, and the clothing we wear? He provides for all our wants and preserves us against thousands of accidents that might befall us.

2d. But God is not only our Father because He has given us life and preserves it, but also because He has adopted us through His grace. To adopt some one, means to take him for son. Now, faith teaches us that the eternal Father has acknowledged us as His children in baptism, and thus has rendered us brethren and coheirs of Jesus Christ: *Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us*,

*that we should be called and should be the sons of God* (I. John III. 1). What a glory and what a happiness for us! If a prince of this world were to rank us among his children, how happy would we esteem ourselves! But we are made the children of the King of kings, the lord and master of the universe. St. Paul calls us: *Coheirs of Christ.* God, by adopting us as his children, and by making us brothers of Jesus Christ, made us at the same time the heirs of His kingdom. Heaven, and heaven with all its imperishable goods and its ineffable delights, is the magnificent heritage reserved for us, if we live as good and worthy children of God.

But why do we say "Our Father," and not My Father? Our Saviour wished to remind us that being all children of God, we are all brothers among one another. Since we are all brothers, should we not love and mutually assist one another as members of the same family? We should all be united in sentiments of real affection, which should manifest itself exteriorly by a true devotedness and by effective services rendered to our neighbor. It is not sufficient to speak of equality and fraternity. If we are really brothers in Christ, if we really love God, our Father, we will also sincerely love our neighbor, we will live in peace, and we will form only one heart and soul like the early Christians.

*Our Father who art in heaven!* The word "heaven" reminds us that, although God is everywhere, nevertheless heaven is the principal sojourn of the Deity, the throne of His glory, and thither our thoughts and desires should be directed. Prayer being an elevation of our soul to God, it is in order to assist us to elevate ourselves to Him, that our Master makes us say: "Our Father who art in heaven." If we wish to enter into the spirit of our Lord, we should at the beginning of "Our Father," raise our thoughts towards heaven, and contemplate God and the happiness which He has there prepared for us; and we say: "Our Father who art in heaven" in order that we may detach our hearts from this world and raise our minds to heaven.

III. Let us enter now into the explanation of each of the seven petitions which compose the "Our Father."

1st Petition. *Hallowed be thy name.* By these words we must not understand that the name of God can acquire any addition of glory; for the name of God is holiness itself. But when we say: "Hallowed be thy name," we ask that the glory and sanctity of God's name may be spread to all parts of the earth, and that men may

always render to Him the homage and honor that are due to Him. We pray for pagans and infidels in order that God may make Himself known to them, and that they may abandon their false worship and embrace His holy and adorable religion. We pray for heretics and schismatics, in order that they may return to the bosom of the true Church which alone can lead them to salvation. We pray for sinners, and particularly for those who dishonor God's holy name through perjury, cursing, and blaspheming, in order that they may recognize the enormity of their sins and turn from their wicked ways. But we pray especially for ourselves in order that He may give us the grace to bless His holy name and to love and serve Him with an always increasing fervor. But in asking God for all these graces, let not your conduct be in opposition to your words; you especially who have the habit of speaking injuriously of God, of religion, and of its ministers, be on your guard; for you cannot recite the words: "Hallowed be Thy name," without condemning yourselves.

2d Petition. *Thy kingdom come.* The kingdom of God is threefold: 1st. His temporal kingdom upon earth through the triumph of the Gospel. 2d. His spiritual kingdom in our souls through His grace, and 3d. His eternal kingdom in heaven. To ask God that His kingdom may come is, therefore, to ask, first, that the Church may be spread and flourish everywhere; second, that God may reign in our soul by His grace, and that He alone may be its Master; third, that He may make us merit to reign with Him forever in heaven.

The Church of God is always at war with the world and with the powers of hell. The enemies of our salvation are continually laboring at our destruction; it is to call God to the assistance of His Church and to our help, and to conjure Him to preserve us from the dominion of the devil, that we ask Him that His kingdom may come. We ask that it may come to us in this world by the constant and ever progressive triumph of the true religion, as well as through the infusion of grace and the presence of the Holy Ghost in our souls; and that it may come also in the next world, by the possession of the eternal glory. "Thy kingdom come." How sweet and loving a wish! It is as if we would say: "Oh, God, we do not want the kingdom of the devil, nor of the passions, nor of the world; but we desire that Thou mayest be our sole sovereign and Master; we desire that Thou only shouldst reign in us during life, in order that we may reign with Thee after death in a blessed eternity." But how can we say that we

desire the kingdom of God in our souls, if the devil reigns there as absolute master and we do nothing to drive him out? How can we hope to reign one day in heaven, if we employ no means to merit it, and when, by our sins and vices, we put ourselves in continual danger of losing it?

3d Petition. *Thy will be done.* In God there are two kinds of will: one by which He determines all things and which nothing can resist; the other, by which He signifies and declares to us what He desires us to do, but which we are free to obey or not to obey. The first of these two wills is manifested to us in the happy or unhappy events that befall us, such as health or illness, abundance or misery, joy or sorrow. Evidently, this will is always fulfilled whether we consent to it or not. But what we ask of God by the words: "Thy will be done," is that we may receive with gratitude and love the goods which He grants to us, and submit ourselves, with resignation and patience, to any evils which heaven sends to us. This resignation to the will of God is a great grace, for besides being indispensable to salvation, it becomes for us the source of the most abundant consolations, as we can see in the lives of the saints, and especially in that of the holy man Job. The other will of God by which He manifests to us what He requires from us, leaving us our free will, is made known to us: 1st. Through the commandments which He imposes upon us; 2d. Through the wonderful lessons of virtue which our Lord has given to us in the Gospel; 3d. Through the instructions of those whom He has given to us as guides, *viz.*, the priests of His Church; 4th. Through the voice of our parents and temporal superiors; 5th. Finally, through the secret inspirations of grace. But we would commit sin more or less grievous, and expose ourselves to damnation, if we were to refuse to submit to God's holy will in all things. Let us pray to God to give us the grace to conform ourselves faithfully to His holy will, and to show the same zeal and love which the angels and saints display in heaven. Ah! what a beautiful spectacle would the world present if God's will were done everywhere; if everywhere there would be resigned, submissive, and obedient hearts; if the thousands of human wills would always conform themselves to the divine will! Let us pray that this may be the case with us in future; for this is not only the fulfillment of the Gospel, but it is the perfection of the Gospel. All the precepts and all the counsels of spiritual life can be reduced to one duty — conformity to the will of God.

Such is, my brethren, the meaning of these three first petitions. What excellent teachings they contain! We say: "Our Father who art in heaven." But are we really His children? We say: "Hallowed be Thy name." But can we sincerely desire the glory of God's name and at the same time outrage it by sins and blasphemies? "Thy kingdom come." Why, then, do we permit the devil to reign as master in our soul? "Thy will be done." But why do we murmur and why are we impatient in the evils which God sends us; and why do we violate the laws which the holy will of God imposes on us? Beware, my brethren, of condemning yourselves, if your life is not in harmony with your prayer. Humble yourselves before God for your carelessnesses in reciting that admirable prayer and in future try to say it with sentiments of faith, with profound respect and with a sincere sorrow for your sins. Amen.

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## V. INSTRUCTION

### On the Lord's Prayer (*Concluded*)

4th Petition. *Give us this day our daily bread.* Here begin the petitions that have for their object our own wants. By the words: "Give us this day our daily bread," we ask God to grant to us all that is necessary for us for both body and soul. For the soul we ask for the bread of the word of God, for the Blessed Eucharist.

It is written: *Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God* (Matt. IV. 4). It is especially in the instructions and sermons that this bread of the word of God is distributed to you. Come, therefore, to assist at them with exactitude, and listen to them with attention and respect. Woe to the one that shows only indifference and disgust for this spiritual nourishment of the soul; his state is similar to a sick person to whom the best of nourishment appears tasteless, who has no desire for any kind of food, and who, consequently, will end by dying of starvation.

We ask, also, for the Eucharistic bread which is the bread *par excellence*, the supersubstantial bread, as St. Matthew calls it, the bread of angels. *He that eateth this bread shall live forever*, says our

divine Saviour (John VI. 59). It is, therefore, His desire that we should eat this bread, because for reward He promises us eternal life; and it is even His will that we should eat often thereof, because He calls it *our daily bread*. But we must receive it with the necessary dispositions, that is, with purity of heart, with sentiments of humility, love, and confidence. Without these this heavenly manna, far from being for us a wholesome nourishment, would be for us a mortal poison. Do you often have recourse to this divine nourishment? How many there are who, instead of making it their daily bread, hardly come to receive it once a year! And with what unworthy dispositions do they even then receive it!

For the body we ask three things: nourishment, lodging, and clothing; for all our corporal necessities can be reduced to this threefold want. All these things come from God, and though our labor and industry is necessary to procure them, it is not less true that the God of mercy grants them to us. But to obtain these goods, we must ask them for a worthy purpose, and we must have the intention to use them only for the greater glory of God and the salvation of our soul; for were we to make use of them only to offend God, certainly it would be much better to be deprived of them forever. Moreover, let us ask only what is necessary, what is sufficient for our needs, renouncing cheerfully everything superfluous. Indeed, says St. Paul, *having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content* (I. Tim. VI. 8). And if God grants us the superfluous without our asking for it, we must consider it as a deposit which God entrusts to us for the poor, and to make use of it only to relieve the unfortunate. Finally, let us avoid a too much anxiety in these kinds of demands, and let us be careful not to be occupied too much with the next day. *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof* (Matt. VI. 34), says our Lord in the Gospel. And when He desires that we should humbly expose to Him our needs, He also desires that we should rely upon His providence and His paternal care. For this reason He teaches us that we should ask of Him each day the bread that is necessary for the present, and not bread for our whole life.

5th Petition. *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* In this petition we ask God for two things: The pardon of our sins, and the means to obtain it, that is, the grace of penance. Contrition is the indispensable condition of pardon. Consequently, in order that God may grant us the pardon of our offenses,

we must sovereignly detest them, or at least we must commence to do so. Without this sorrow for our faults, or this commencement of repentance, our prayer would be nothing but hypocrisy, and we would be like an unnatural son, who, after having outraged the best of fathers, would excuse himself and continue, at the same time, to outrage him.

Notice also, my brethren, under what condition you ask pardon. «Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.» It is only in so far as you pardon others that you ask to be pardoned yourselves. Therefore, he who does not wish to pardon his neighbor and to forget the injuries received, cannot expect God to pardon him. Does he not, in making this petition, rather ask God never to pardon him, because he tells God to treat him as he himself treats others? Supposing that some one has sworn an implacable hatred against his enemy, and has declared that he would always keep the remembrance of the offense, and that he would not pardon him even at his death; how could he repeat the words: «Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,» without calling on God to refuse His pardon, even at this last moment, because he himself refuses it to his enemy. You, therefore, whose hearts are full of bitterness against your neighbor, hateful and vindictive souls, think seriously of this; when you say the Lord's Prayer with such evil sentiments, you pronounce your own condemnation. Commence by pardoning with a cheerful heart, by reconciling yourselves with your enemy, and then you can say with sincerity: «My God, pardon me as I pardon those that have offended me.» Then will God also pardon you, and you can appear one day with full confidence before the tribunal of the sovereign Judge, and say to Him: «Lord, be merciful to me, as I have shown mercy myself.»

6th Petition. *Lead us not into temptation.* Temptation is an inner movement of the soul which inclines us to do evil. For example, it enters your mind to steal something, or to commit a bad action, and you feel yourself moved to do it; then we are said to be tempted. Temptations generally come from the devil, from our passions, and from the world — three powerful and indefatigable enemies who never cease to wage war against us. God permits us to be tempted, in order to try our virtue and to increase our merit in heaven. What merit has a soldier who has never been in battle, and who was never exposed to the fortunes and dangers of war?

To resist temptations we are in need of the help of heaven, for by ourselves we are too weak; and it is this help which we implore in the Lord's Prayer, when we say: "Lead us not into temptation." Notice that you do not ask God to be preserved from temptation, for temptation in itself is no evil. In punishment of the sin of our first parents we are all condemned to temptation. But we pray that God may not permit us to give way to temptation, that is, to grant us the graces of which we stand in need in order not to consent to the thought of evil and not to yield to that inner movement which inclines us to sin; or to render the temptations less violent.

But in order that this petition may have its effect, be very careful not to seek temptations, for it is written that *he that loves the danger shall perish in it* (Eccl. III. 27). We must, on the contrary, do all we can to avoid them. Fleeing the occasions, watchfulness over ourselves, sobriety, labor, and prayer are the means we must employ. And when, in spite of all these precautions, temptations assail us, then let us pray to the Lord to come to our assistance, by saying: *Lord, lead us not into temptation:* or, as the apostles on the point of being drowned: *Lord, save us, we perish* (Matt. VIII. 25); or, as David: *O Lord, make haste to help me* (Ps. XLIX. 2). Whatever may be the violence of the temptation, let us never permit ourselves to be conquered; for God will never allow us to be tempted above our strength; He will grant to us always the help necessary to resist temptation and to go forth victorious, if we ask for it with an humble confidence.

7th Petition. *But deliver us from evil.* This petition, which ends the Lord's Prayer, is, so to say, its complement and recapitulation. In fact, says St. Cyprian, what can remain for us to desire, when we obtain from God deliverance from all evil?

To understand well the meaning of this petition, we must distinguish two kinds of evils: temporal evils and spiritual evils, or, the evils of the body and those of the soul. With regard to corporal evils, such as illness, famine, war, and other afflictions, we should suffer them with patience and resignation when they befall us; for we have merited them through our sins, and, moreover, they can be of great help for us to merit heaven. The saints not only cheerfully subjected themselves to corporal evils, but they even often desired them in order to render their life more conformable to that of Jesus Christ, which was a continual cross and martyrdom. However, as

we are generally so weak, and as these evils might become for us an occasion of impatience and murmuring, we may pray to God to preserve us from them, if He deems it good, but always ready to submit to His holy will in all things.

As to the spiritual evils from which we pray to God to deliver us, they are: 1st. Sin, the greatest of all evils, the only evil which outrages God. What are all other evils compared to this, since a God had to die to expiate it? 2d. The punishments due to sin, that is, the punishments of hell and purgatory, which would inevitably be our lot if we did not perform in this world a penance proportionate to our sins. 3d. Temptations, and especially those which come from concupiscence, that is from our passions — from that natural inclination we have to evil, on account of original sin. 4th. Finally, all that can remove us from God, as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and final impenitence.

We end "Our Father" with the word *Amen*, which is derived from the Hebrew language, and which signifies *May it be so*, or, I desire it. It is thus that we generally end all our prayers, in order to declare that we approve all that we have said, and that we ardently desire that God, in His infinite goodness, may hear the petitions we address to Him.

In this instruction, my brethren, and in the preceding one, you have seen what wonderful things are contained in the Lord's Prayer. As we have said at the beginning, it contains in substance all that we have to ask from God, either for the present life, or the life to come. There is not a single useless word; each has a more or less profound meaning. It is also the first prayer which we learned from our pious mothers, the first prayer that we learned in our infancy. All the saints had a particular devotion to the Lord's Prayer.

St. Hugh, a bishop of Grenoble, in France, never tired reciting it, even during the pains of a violent illness, when his servant told him that the fatigue of repeating the prayer so often might retard his recovery. "Ah! you are deceived," he said, "on the contrary, it can only benefit me." St. Francis of Assisi also found his greatest joy in reciting the Lord's Prayer, and St. Francis of Sales tells us that, in order that its recitation may be wholesome to us, we must well weigh and appreciate all its words. A celebrated preacher, distinguished by both his piety and zeal for the salvation of souls, Father Lejeune, never said the "Our Father" without shedding tears. Many

pious persons daily found new sources of consolation in the "Our Father," and many of them consecrated an entire week to recite it once, employing a whole day to the meditation of each of the seven petitions.

Let us imitate such beautiful examples. May this prayer also be for us the object of the most tender and most ardent devotion. Let us say it in the morning on rising, to ask God to spread His blessing over our day's work; let us say it in the evening to thank Him for the graces He has given us during the day, and to ask Him for those we may need to pass the night well; let us also say it occasionally during the day, and especially in times of temptation and danger. We sometimes find persons who say that they do not know how to pray; but if they know the "Our Father," what more do they need? Still it is not enough to recite it often; let us also recite it with attention, devotion, and confidence, and it will be for us, as for the saints, a source of peace and consolation. Amen.

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## VI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Hail Mary

I. After the Lord's Prayer, the "Hail Mary" is the most excellent and the most used prayer in the Church. It is called the "Hail Mary," because it begins with the salutation which the archangel Gabriel addressed to Mary when he announced to her, from the part of the Most High, that she was destined to become the Mother of the Saviour.

Ordinarily, we recite it after the "Our Father" for two reasons: 1st. Because after having honored God, it is proper that we should also honor the mother of His only Son; 2d. Because Mary being our most powerful advocate with her divine Son, she can greatly assist us in obtaining all that we ask for in the "Our Father."

The "Hail Mary" consists of two parts. The first is composed of the words of the archangel Gabriel and of St. Elisabeth; and the second, of the words which the Church has added. The words of the archangel Gabriel are: *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,*

*blessed art thou among women.* The words of St. Elisabeth are: *Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* The words of the Church are: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.*

II. *Hail*, was the word with which the angel greeted Mary to congratulate her as the mother of God and to render homage to her dignity. It was the first time in the world's history that a prince of the heavenly court came to pay his respects to one of our fallen race. In the Old Law, the angels appeared sometimes to the patriarchs and even to holy women, as to Sara and Agar; but they did not bow before human creatures and did not offer them homage. Why, then, the extraordinary honors rendered to Mary? Because she surpassed all angels and men in graces and merits, and because she was destined to become the mother of a God.

III. *Hail Mary.* The word Mary means Lady, Queen, Mother, Mistress, and it properly belongs to the Blessed Virgin; because in becoming the mother of God, she became at the same time the great lady of the universe, the queen of heaven and earth, the mistress of angels and men, and the mother of all Christians. Sweet and amiable name! Name above every name, after that of Jesus! Glorious name which the greatest queens of earth considered it an honor to bear!

IV. *Hail Mary, full of grace.* What magnificent praise of Mary is contained in these few words! Mary is full of grace, because she was the offspring of the illustrious race of kings and patriarchs of the Old Testament; she is full of grace, because, as Solomon teaches under the veil of an allegory, *she is all fair and there is no spot in her* (Cant. iv. 7). But she is especially full of grace, because she has been preserved from original sin from the very moment of her conception and during her whole life she was exempt from all actual sin and from all inclination to sin, and because, filled with love for her God and zeal for His glory, she attained by her virtues and merits such a degree of perfection as cannot be attained by any other creature, not even by the angels in heaven. The Fathers of the Church assure us that Mary alone has received more graces than all the saints together, and they compare her with that mysterious fleece of Gedeon which, in one night, collected all the heavenly dew. They call Mary the reservoir of all graces, and teach that from her as from a source all graces flow. O, Mary, how pure and amiable art thou! Thou art resplendent with holiness and glory, and most worthy of our respect

and of our love! Ah! grant that we may walk in thy footsteps here on earth in order that we may see and contemplate thee forever in heaven!

V. *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.* Undoubtedly, God is with Mary as He is in the souls of all the just, by sanctifying grace; but He is also with Mary in a more intimate manner. God the Father is with Mary, as a bridegroom with his bride, because she conceived in time the One whom He begot from all eternity. God the Son is with Mary as her Son. God the Holy Ghost is with Mary as in His temple. But in considering this union only in the incarnate Word, these words signify that in the very instant when the angel spoke to Mary the Son of God came to descend into her chaste womb; that she bore Him during nine months in her bosom; that after having brought Him forth, she will nourish Him, she will see Him grow in age and wisdom, will follow Him in His evangelical travels, be witness of His works and miracles, will assist at His sacrifice on Calvary, and later will be reunited with Him, never more to be separated from Him. The Lord will also be with us, if we desire to be with Him. He has no more lively desire than to reign in our souls so as to make us reign with Him in heaven. But how does it come that we remain obstinate in living separate from so dear a friend, from so good and tender a father, and to expose ourselves by our sins to lose Him forever!

VI. *Blessed art thou among women.* This is what Solomon had foretold long before: *Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all* (Prov. xxxi. 29). The sacred books are full of illustrious names carried by holy heroines; but it can be easily seen that their glory and grandeur was only a shadow and outline of that which later on was to be realized in Mary. Debora conquered the enemies of God's people and sang the praises of God; but Mary triumphed over the enemy of mankind, and the hymn of her gratitude, the Magnificat, is still repeated by all mouths. Judith saved Bethulia, by cutting off the head of the cruel Holofernes; but Mary in bringing forth the Saviour of the world, crushed the head of the infernal serpent, and delivered mankind from bondage. Esther found favor before King Assuerus, and won life and liberty for a proscribed race. But Mary found grace before the King of kings, and averted God's anger from the heads of a guilty race. Mary conceived, without ceasing to be a virgin, brought forth without pain, and tasted the

joys of motherhood, while preserving intact the honor of virginity. She is the new Eve; she has given us life, as the first Eve brought death into the world. We can say of both what St. Paul said of the two Adams — that the first was all earthly, whilst the second came to us from heaven.

But if Mary is blessed among all women by the favors and privileges with which she has been overwhelmed, so have all women also been blessed in Mary: *The first man was of the earth, earthly, the second man from heaven, heavenly* (I. Cor. xv. 47). Before the coming of Mary, women were condemned to the hardest and most shameful slavery. Subject to pitiless masters, rather than being united to good and tender husbands, they were treated only as servants. They were often abandoned and driven from home. The pagans hardly reckoned women among the number of human creatures. And even in our own days, among those nations ignorant of the Gospel, to what degradation, to what ignominies is woman not condemned? In one country they are locked up like a herd to gratify the voluptuousness of a cruel master; in another country they are condemned to perpetual widowhood after the death of a first husband, or they are forced to cast themselves alive on the funeral pyre of their dead master. Whole books would be needed to depict the horrors and indignities which non-Christian nations have heaped upon woman. But Mary appeared, and in the same time her sex was raised from its degradation and restored to all its primitive rights. The indissolubility of marriage was proclaimed, and the Christian woman became anew an object of regard, of love, and of respect. Christian wives, bless Mary, your great deliverer, after Jesus, and always honor her as the most beautiful and most perfect woman. Let us all bless and honor her with the angel Gabriel for the part she has taken in the redemption of the world, for the eminent dignity with which she is clothed, and for the numberless benefits with which she overwhelms us every day.

VII. But our homage will be agreeable to Mary only, when we join with them a praise for her divine Son, and this is why, after having proclaimed her blessed among women, St. Elisabeth teaches us to add: *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb* (*Jesus*). Jesus and Mary, two inseparable names, the object of all our worship, as they should be the object of all our veneration and of all our love. We cannot honor the one without the other; in vain would we call our-

selves the servants of Mary, if at the same time we were not the faithful disciples of Jesus, because from the Son the Mother holds all her grandeur and all her glory, and because He is the principle and source of all blessings which are spread upon earth, and because nobody can be blessed except through Him.

In the next instruction we shall see the motives which the Church suggests to excite our love and confidence in Mary.

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## VII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Hail Mary (*Concluded*)

I. *Holy Mary, Mother of God.* Such are the first words which the Church has added to the "Hail Mary." Mary is indeed "holy"; she was conceived without sin, and she never suffered the least stain of sin or imperfection. She far exceeds the angels and saints in sanctity, and there is no holiness comparable to hers.

II. *Holy Mary, Mother of God.* This title of Mother of God, a title so glorious to Mary, is hers because she conceived in her chaste womb and brought forth Jesus Christ, true God. She is mother of Jesus Christ only according to His humanity; but in Jesus Christ the humanity and the divinity are so united that they are inseparable, and after their intimate union only the divine person remains. Mary is therefore the Mother of God. When the impious Nestorius denied that Mary was the Mother of God, the entire Church assembled at Ephesus hastened to condemn the blasphemer. He refused to retract and was ignominiously driven from the city and sent into exile where he died a miserable death.

III. How great must be the glory and dignity of Mary in heaven! As Mother of God, she is united with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. She is allied with the holy and adorable Trinity, ranking next to God, admitted to the counsel and partaking in all the favors of the Divinity. As Mother of God, she is the queen of heaven and earth, elevated above the angels and the whole celestial court; below God, indeed, but raised above all that is not God. How great must be her influence and her power in heaven! *Mother, ask*

*what you please*, says Jesus to her, *and all will be granted to thee, for I must not turn away thy face* (III. Ki. II. 20). And what could her divine Son refuse to the mother who bore Him in her bosom, who nourished Him with her own substance, who suffered so much on His account and lavished so many cares upon Him! So great is the influence which Mary enjoys with her divine Son, that she can do by her prayers whatever He can do by His almighty power. Although her power in heaven is not absolute and independent as that of God, and although it is only an all-powerful intercession, it is not less efficacious; for, as we often say, the prayers of a beloved mother are commands. How powerful must be the prayers of a Mother such as Mary with a Son such as Jesus!

It is difficult to overrate the influence and power of Mary. According to the opinion of the most famous doctors of the Church, God never grants any grace except through the intercession of Mary. As much as Eve contributed to our loss, so much Mary contributed to our salvation. Jesus Christ is the source of all graces, and Mary is the channel through which they flow. All heavenly gifts pass through her hands; she is the steward and dispensatrix of grace, according to the expression of St. Bernardin of Siena. Is it not, therefore, a rigorous duty, as well as an absolute one, for us to have recourse to Mary? Since it is the arrangement of Providence, since it is the will of God, that we can be saved only through Mary, would it not be imperiling our salvation not to implore her protection?

IV. We can have recourse to Mary with all confidence. For as much as Mary is powerful with her divine Son, so much is she full of love and goodness for us. It is sufficient to remember that Mary the Mother of God is also our mother. Our Saviour Himself left us this precious legacy on Mount Calvary. What a touching scene! The Saviour hanging on the cross sees at His feet the two dearest objects of His heart: His tender mother and His well-beloved disciple: *Woman*, he says, *behold thy son*, and then addressing St. John, who represented all the faithful, He says: *Behold thy mother* (John XIX. 27). But if Mary is our mother what must not be her tenderness for us who are her children! Can a mother be insensible to the wants and miseries of those to whom she has given life? And thou Mary, the best and most tender of mothers, couldst thou be insensible to our misery? Couldst thou leave us without help in the midst of so many enemies bound to destroy us? Oh, no! this thought would be an outrage.

We might as well say that God is indifferent to our happiness or to our misfortune, to our salvation or to our perdition.

Read history, read the lives of the saints, read the authentic accounts of the miracles wrought through the intercession of Mary, examine the *Ex votos* which are suspended on the walls of churches and chapels dedicated to her honor, and there you will find striking proofs of her continual protection, of her love and inexhaustible goodness towards mankind. "Count if you can," says a pious author, "how often she has consolidated kingdoms and empires! To how many armies she has given victory! To how many heresies she has put an end! Count, if you can, from how many perils devotion to Mary has delivered those that have practiced it! How many sick she has healed! How many she has delivered from the flames, from the horrors of war, from famine and pest! . . . What tribulations, what sufferings, what evils of every kind did Mary not banish!" All this she has done for the welfare of the body. And for the soul, how many graces has one not obtained through her intercession! How many just ones owe to her their perseverance; how many obstinate sinners their conversion! No one ever implored her assistance in vain. "Yes, O Virgin Mary," cried out St. Bernard in the fervor of his zeal, "I am willing never more to speak of thy mercy, if there is anybody here who, after having invoked thee, can say that he was not helped by thee."

Such are, my brethren, the powerful motives of confidence with which the words, "Holy Mary, Mother of God," should inspire us. Mary as Mother of God, is all-powerful before God; and Mary as our mother, is full of goodness and mercy towards us. Let us, therefore, invoke this good and tender mother, and let us invoke her with full confidence, in saying to her with the Church: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners." Yes, O holy Virgin, we acknowledge that we are sinners, poor miserable sinners, all covered with iniquities, and unworthy to be counted among the number of thy children. But, if we have been unworthy children till now, we will not be so any longer. We beg thee to obtain for us the necessary graces to begin a new life: Pray for us sinners.

VI. Pray for us sinners, *now:* that is, during our whole lifetime. The past no longer belongs to us, neither is the future ours, and perhaps never will be ours. Only the present moment is at our disposal. But this present time, however rapid it may be, is the time of perils,

is the time of trials and combats, it is the battlefield where we have to combat the three dreadful enemies who are conspiring for our ruin: the world, our passions, and hell. *Now* is the time of our pilgrimage in the valley of tears, all filled with afflictions and miseries; miseries for the body and miseries for the soul. How can we resist so many assaults, surmount so many obstacles, face so many dangers, we whose weakness is so great that we can do nothing for our salvation, without the help of God! Therefore, O Mary, pray for us *now;* for if thou dost not stretch forth thy helping hand, we are lost. Pray for us *now;* for the time is short and the end approaches. Pray for us *now;* for perhaps upon this present moment our eternal lot will depend.

VII. But it is especially at death, my brethren, that we shall need Mary's assistance, because in that decisive moment, and in that moment of trouble and anxiety, our enemies will redouble their rage and fury to encompass our ruin. "O Mary, pray for us, *now and at the hour of our death.*" Pray, in order that in this last moment the devil may have no power over us; pray that if unfortunately we have been in the state of mortal sin, we may have time to acknowledge it and to do penance; pray that we may have time to make our confession and to receive the *Viaticum* with full knowledge and proper sentiments. *Pray for us, now and at the hour of our death.* Happy the one who invokes thee thus with confidence during his whole life! He will merit that thou wilt assist him in this last hour and, aided by thy powerful hand, he needs to fear nothing from the part of his enemies, and he will peaceably fall asleep in thy maternal arms until awakening in heaven.

VIII. *Amen*, so be it. By this word the Church ends all her prayers, and such is also the last word of the *Angelic Salutation.* "Amen" is the consent we give to all what it contains. "Amen," be it so, may all the sentiments we have expressed to Mary be accepted by her, and may all that we have asked for ourselves be granted to us.

IX. Recite often this excellent prayer, but recite it with attention, love, and confidence. You cannot address a more beautiful prayer to this good and tender mother, nor one that is more certain to obtain her assistance. Recite it with pious sentiments, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, when the *Angelus* bell rings, in remembrance of the Incarnation — an excellent practice, to which numerous

indulgences are attached. Make it also your duty to recite the Rosary daily, and never be ashamed to carry the beads about you or to hold them in your hand. But to become good and faithful servants of Mary, do not limit yourselves to praying to her, but enter some of her Confraternities, visit chapels or altars dedicated to her, receive the sacraments on her feast days, and, above all, try to walk in her footsteps by imitating her virtues; and by thus honoring the mother you will honor the Son, and you will merit to be united with both for all eternity. Amen.

# THIRD PART

## ON CHARITY AND THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

### I. INSTRUCTION

#### On Charity towards God

CHARITY is a gift of God by which we love Him above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. Of the three theological virtues it is the sweetest and the most excellent; it is the one which gives lustre and value to all the others, and without which faith and hope would profit us nothing: *Now there remain faith, hope, and charity; but the greatest of these is charity* (I. Cor. xiii. 13). St. Paul says: *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and I have not charity, it profiteth me nothing* (I. Cor. xiii. 1–3). But, on the contrary, *with* charity we have all. In the love of God and of our neighbor are contained the law and the prophets (Matt. xxii. 40); that is, the whole Gospel and all the duties which it prescribes to us. Therefore, it is important to know well the nature, necessity, and practice of charity. We have to devote several instructions to this subject. Let us begin with the charity towards God, and first let us study its motives and characters.

II. Why should we love God? Undoubtedly, because He commands us to do so: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God* (Matt. xxii. 37). Being the absolute master over our hearts, has He not the right

to require that we should consecrate ourselves entirely to Him? "But, O my God," cries St. Augustine, "was it then necessary to command us to love Thee? Would it not be for us the greatest of all misfortunes, if we did not love Thee?" We should love God because He is infinitely amiable, because He is infinitely good and just, that is, we should love Him from a motive of justice, from a motive of gratitude; and, shall I say it, we should love Him for our own interest.

1st Motive. *Justice.*—I will not undertake to draw a picture of all the divine perfections. It is an abyss into which our weak intelligence cannot penetrate. The angels and even the seraphim, who see God face to face, can only contemplate Him, love Him, and celebrate His praises. God alone can understand Himself, and all I could tell you would be infinitely below the reality. Thus, if I were to tell you that God is not only infinitely great and powerful, but that He is the greatness and power itself; that He is not only holy and wise, but that He is holiness and wisdom itself; in short, if I were to tell you that God possesses in Himself all the qualities and all the perfections that can be imagined, and that He possesses them all in the most perfect degree, this, undoubtedly, would be telling you something, and, nevertheless, it would be nothing in comparison with the reality. I would be only lisping like a child, and I could say with the prophet: *I cannot speak* (Jer. 1. 6).

To form an idea of the grandeur and perfections of God, represent to yourselves all that is the greatest, the most amiable, the most magnificent, in creatures, in the firmament with its numberless stars, in the seas with their extent and the immense riches lying in their bosom, in the earth with its inexhaustible fruitfulness, finally in all that nature can offer to our eyes as most seducing and most enchanting, and you will have but a dim shadow and obscure picture of the infinite beauty of God. It is from Him, as from a fruitful and inexhaustible source, that flow all the perfections of creatures, all the wonders of the world; but they are only a pale and slight reflex of God's greatness. By His sovereign and immortal glory He eclipses and effaces all created beings more than the sun, which at its rising eclipses the stars of the firmament. He is so beautiful, He is so great, He is so amiable, that in heaven His sole presence enraptures the blessed and plunges them into ecstasies of happiness and love. The more they love Him, the more they feel themselves moved to love Him; and we ourselves upon earth, if we could see Him such as He

is, could not help loving Him and would never grow tired of loving Him. One glimpse of His glory and majesty would forever deprive us of our will, and even of the power to displease Him; our happiness would be similar to that of the heavenly spirits, and the earth would become another paradise. St. Paul was one day carried into the third heaven, and for a moment he beheld the ineffable light which the elect enjoy. This magnificent spectacle, which the eye of man has never seen, threw him into inexpressible admiration, and from this time life became a burden to him and he longed to die in order to go and possess God forever.

Yet how does it come that we love such an amiable God so little, and that we have such love for the vanity, the goods and pleasures of this world? Blind as we are, we prostitute our hearts to idols of flesh and blood, we sigh only after vain riches and frivolous dress, and we do not realize that all that is beautiful and perfect here below comes from God who is the author of all things. We love the creature, and we do not love the Creator; we admire the work, and we forget the workman who made it. Oh, children of men, *harden not your hearts* (Hebr. III. 8).

2d Motive. *Gratitude.*— If you are insensible to the voice of justice, perhaps you will listen to the voice of gratitude. Since God loves you so much, will you not feel yourselves bound to love Him in return? Measure, if you can, the full extent of the love which God bears you, and count the benefits with which He overwhelms you every day. Without speaking of those you have received in the order of nature, such as life, health, goods, talents, what has He not done for you in the order of grace? Children of a guilty father, you were in His eyes only objects of wrath and vengeance. Eternal damnation would have been infallibly your lot, if God, who alone could redeem you, would not have had mercy on you. What, therefore, has the Lord done to save you, or, rather, what has He not done? He had a Son, an only Son, the only object of His complacency, God like Him, eternal, almighty, and perfect like Him; and this Son He sacrificed, He immolated for you, as if He loved you more than He loved His own Son.

And the Son of God Himself, the Saviour, how far did He not push the excess of His love! Consider Him in the stable of Bethlehem, follow Him into the Garden of Olives, into the various tribunals of Jerusalem and up the mount of Calvary; does your heart not speak

to you at the sight of so many prodigies of pain, annihilation, and love? Tell me, if one of you had been condemned to death by human justice, and if the only son of a king should be willing to die in his place, could the condemned man remain insensible to such love? And, nevertheless, remark that the only Son of God, the King of kings, not only died for you once on the cross, but He immolates Himself still every day on our altars and, what is still more incomprehensible, in His ineffable love He found a way to remain always with us; even to give Himself to us, to nourish us with His divine substance, and identify Himself, so to say, with us! Can one conceive a prodigy of love like this; and could God, all-powerful as He is, do anything more? How in considering all this could we refuse to love a God who loved us so much? *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema* (I. Cor. XVI. 22). His heart would be harder than the stones that were rent at Jesus' death on Calvary, more insensible than the dead themselves who then arose. We would have to say that he who refuses to love God has no heart at all.

3d Motive. *Our Own Interest.*—To the reasons we have to love God, drawn from motives of justice and gratitude, I wish to add a last motive, not less powerful, that of your own interest. My brethren, do you desire to be happy in this world and in the next? Love God.

In this world, happiness is possible only in so far as one has peace with his conscience, peace with God: *There is no peace to the wicked* (Is. XLVIII. 22). But if our heart is penetrated with the love of God, what sweetness, what consolation is ours! St. Paul, even in chains and in the horrors of a dungeon, tells us that he abounded with joy (II. Cor. VII. 4). St. Xavier, in the midst of the fatigues of his apostolate and in a foreign land, among idolatrous peoples, cried out: "My heart is too full of joy, O Lord, my happiness is too great!" Have you not sometimes experienced the joy of God's love? Remember the day of your first communion, of a good confession. Have you ever enjoyed happier days?

But it is especially in heaven that we shall taste the unspeakable joys and sweetness of divine love. In this world, God lets fall His sweetness only drop by drop; but in heaven, it is in torrents. In this world, *we see God through the shadows of faith, but in heaven we shall see Him face to face and such as He is* (I. Cor. XIII. 12). And

in seeing Him we will love Him with the most holy and most perfect love. Oh! who could express the whole extent of happiness which the saints find in the ecstasies of this love! One day St. Monica was conversing on this subject with her son Augustine, when, suddenly, her heart became so inflamed with the divine love, that she lost all power of speech and fell into an ecstasy. Having come to herself again, she cried out: "O God, what am I doing here below, and what can bind me still to this earth? Why is it not given me to flee at this very moment into Thy holy tabernacles?" And we, also, my brethren, would look with disgust upon all the perishable things of the earth, and we would sigh only after the eternal felicity, if we rightly understood the happiness that is awaiting us there.

III. How should we love God? We must love Him with our whole heart, with our whole mind, and with all our strength (Matt. xxii. 37). This means we must love Him with a sincere love, with a love of preference, and with an efficacious love. To love God with a *sincere love*, is to love Him not only with our lips, but from the bottom of our heart. To love Him with a *love of preference*, is to love Him more than all that is dearest to us in this world, more than father and mother, more than one's own life. To love God with an *efficacious love*, is to be disposed to observe faithfully all His commandments and those of His Church; it is to be resigned to the orders of His Providence in all the trials He sends us, in all the afflictions that befall us; it is to refer to Him all our actions, all our pains, and to have no other intention but to do in all things His holy will. To love God "with one's whole heart, with one's whole mind, and with one's whole strength," is to fly with horror and to detest sovereignly all that displeases Him; it is to be firmly and sincerely resolved to sacrifice riches, honor, and even life itself, rather than to commit a venial sin. Finally, it is to think often of God, to be happy in His presence, to love to visit Him in His temple, to pray to Him, and to converse with pious and fervent persons.

Can we say, my brethren, that thus far we have really loved God with this sincere, sovereign, and efficacious love? You, for instance, who totally neglect the duty of prayer, the services of the church, the sacraments, can you say that you love Him? Surely you do not. And you who live in hatred of your neighbor, who unjustly retain his goods, who daily tarnish his honor by your calumnies and slanders, can you say that you love God? Surely not. And you who have

criminal relations with persons of the other sex, who live in the habit of sin and shame, can you say that you love God? Surely not. And you who respect no law of the Church, who observe neither fast nor abstinence, who do not receive Holy Communion even during Easter time, can you say that you love Him? Surely not. And you, lukewarm and indifferent souls, who fulfill your duties only by half, who do everything with disgust, and rather through custom and routine than through devotion, who are not afraid at all to commit venial faults, can you say that you love God and love Him above all things? No, you do not love Him.

O, my God, what a number of ungrateful children you behold here to-day at your feet! Pardon us, O Lord, our iniquities, our lukewarmness, and our indifference. Yes, we acknowledge that until now we have been far from loving Thee as we should have done, but in future we shall love Thee all the more. It is very late, indeed, that we begin to love Thee, O beauty ever ancient and ever new; but we commence at last and we shall try to love Thee always more and more, to love Thee above all things and to love Thee until death, in order to deserve to love Thee perfectly and to possess Thee eternally in heaven. Amen.

## II. INSTRUCTION

### On Charity towards Our Neighbor

After having treated of the motives and characters of the love of God, there remains for us to speak of the necessity of loving our neighbor and the manner in which we should love him. These two loves are inseparable, and the one is not less indispensable than the other; for, says St. John, *if any man says, I love God, and hateth his neighbor, he is a liar* (I. John iv. 20). This is why in the act of charity, after declaring that we love God above all things, we immediately add: "And our neighbor as ourselves."

Three principal motives should induce us to love our neighbor: the voice of nature, the voice of grace, and the formal command of God.

I. *The voice of nature.*—We are all children of the same father and members of the same family. Rich and poor, great and small, Christians and infidels, we all have the same origin which is God, the same nature and the same destiny which is heaven. Hence, that sympathy by the natural inclination we feel for our fellow-men, when we are not influenced by selfishness and passion. Man naturally seeks the company of man; he loves it, he desires it, and he feels miserable and unhappy if he is condemned to live in solitude.

Men are born to live in society, to help one another in their pains and needs; they are not made to live in a savage state, like the animals in the woods. But without this benevolent charity, and without this mutual love of which we speak, how would society be possible? Is it not evident that without it men would soon come to treat one another like ferocious beasts, always ready to surprise and to devour one another; whilst by charity man becomes to man like a second Providence, by the good offices he renders him.

My brethren, if we would all love one another, what a happy change would soon take place in the world! How compassionate would the rich be to the poor! How honest and obliging would the poor be to the rich! What peace and good order would reign in families, in parishes, and communities. There would be an end of all disorders, divisions, and hatreds, which so often bring on terrible catastrophes and even threaten to overthrow society! Whence arises that dissatisfaction which exists to-day more than ever in society, that violent antagonism between the poor and the rich, those mutterings of discontent and that rumbling of a strife that threatens to subvert society? It is because there is no longer any charity among men. People have become selfish, each one seeks only his own interest, and envies all that are above him in rank and fortune, and men are not ashamed to employ the most unjust means to elevate and to enrich themselves at the expense of others. Show me a country, a parish, a family where charity reigns and you will see that there is neither trouble, nor discord, nor theft, nor slander. Peace reigns supreme therein, and the members have a foretaste of paradise. How happy and peaceful men would be, if everybody would practice charity!

II. *The Voice of Grace.*—We are not only rational and social beings, but we are also Christians, brothers of Jesus Christ, and members of the same holy Church. What a powerful motive for union and mutual love. Behold, says the apostle St. Paul to the Romans,

the different members which compose the human body; how anxious they are to assist one another! When one of them is suffering, how all the others feel uneasy, how they exert themselves, as if they were anxious to assist it! When you happen to get a pin in the foot, says St. Augustine, the eye quickly tries to discover it, the back bends down, and the hand makes efforts to tear it out. When somebody wounds you in any part of the body, the tongue cries out: You hurt me. It does not say: You hurt my foot or my hand, but: You hurt me; showing the intimate union which reigns among the various members of the body.

So, also, are we all members of the mystic body of Jesus Christ, and through Jesus Christ we should sympathize with the miseries of one another, assist one another in our needs, and love one another with the most sincere and most efficacious love. Look at our divine Saviour, our chief and our model, and see what wonderful examples He has given us of this charity during His whole mortal life. Was there ever a man that loved his fellow-men as Jesus Christ loved us? Follow Him in all the circumstances of His hidden life, as well as of His public life, study Him in all His words and in all His actions, and you will see that His every word and action was dictated by the most tender charity. I shall not enter into detail about all that He did in favor of men, to relieve them in their evils and to do them good. I would have to quote the entire Gospel; let it be sufficient to remind you of the stable of Bethlehem and of Calvary. What more could He do to show us His love? Now, my brethren, should not the disciple follow in the footsteps of his Master? And how can we flatter ourselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ, if, instead of this fraternal love and this sympathizing charity with which the whole Gospel breathes, we have for our brethren only indifference, hatred or contempt?

III. *The Formal Precept Which God Has Given Us.*—If there is in the Gospel a positive and fundamental law, it is certainly the law of charity. One day a Doctor of the Law asked our divine Saviour which was the greatest precept of the Law, and He answered: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Matt. xxii. 37–39). During His whole lifetime, Jesus Christ often reminded His disciples of this obligation; but in order that it

should never be effaced from their memory, He returns to it again on the eve of His death, and in that wonderful discourse which He made at the Last Supper, and which we may regard as His last will, He said to them: My children, my little children, *filioli mei*, I am going to leave you. But before I separate Myself from you, I wish to give you a *new commandment*, *which is to love one another*, *as I have loved you* (John xv. 12). Why does Jesus Christ call this commandment new? It is not new, indeed, as to the substance, because it dates not only from the law of Moses, but from the very origin of the world; but it is because Jesus Christ asks of us a more perfect love than that which had been prescribed until then. In another place He adds that it is not only a new precept which He wishes to give them, but it is *His* precept: *This is my commandment.* As if He were saying to them that this is His whole law, and that all the other obligations which He imposes on them can be reduced to the one: To love one another as He has loved us, *That you love one another as I have loved you* (John xiii. 34).

And in order that there may not be the least doubt about His words, and to make us understand the importance He attaches to this commandment, He adds, in the same place, that it is by this mark, that it is by this fraternal love that everybody will know whether we are His disciples. *By this shall know all men that you are my disciples* (John xiii. 35). It is not, says St. Augustine, by the power of driving out devils, or raising the dead to life, or by working the greatest miracles, that Christians will be known, but they will be known by fraternal charity. Our Saviour wished that charity should be the distinctive character of the Christian, the mark by which everybody could recognize His true followers.

How, then, can we doubt the necessity of fraternal charity, and how can one believe himself to be a Christian if he does not love his neighbor? Consider the life of the early Christians, instructed in the school of the Saviour; what peace, what union, what charity! There was never among them the least hatred, the least discord; never any lawsuits nor litigations; even poverty was unknown among them, because those who had goods shared them with those that had none. In a word, the Acts of the Apostles tell us that *they had but one heart and one soul* (Acts. iv. 32). Even the pagans, those sworn enemies of the Christian religion, were astonished and amazed at the charity which reigned among the Christians: *Behold how they love one*

*another*, they said, thus rendering involuntarily testimony to the word of our divine Master, who had said: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples.*

How, then, can any one call himself a Christian if he has no charity? You, hateful and revengeful spirits, who never let pass an occasion to injure your neighbor, can you call yourselves Christians? And you, unjust retainers of another's goods; you, indefatigable litigants, going to court for the most trivial causes; you, men without heart, and you who let the poor die of hunger or cold rather than assist them, can you say that you are the disciples of a God who died a victim of love for us? Can you claim to be members of a religion whose distinctive mark is charity and benevolence? No, you are not Christians, and if you continue to walk in your evil ways, you cannot expect to share one day in the rewards of Jesus Christ.

My brethren, it is related in Church history, that the apostle St. John, while living at Ephesus and being unable to walk, on account of his great age, caused himself to be carried into the church on the arms of his disciples, and not having the strength to make long discourses to them, he contented himself with saying: "My children, my little children, love one another." And when his disciples, somewhat tired of hearing him always repeat the same thing, remonstrated with him, he made to them the beautiful answer: "I always repeat this to you, and this alone, because it is the precept of the Lord, and it alone is sufficient, provided it is well observed."

Neither can I, my brethren, repeat these words too often: love one another. Charity, the Gospel, behold the epitome of the Christian religion! Without charity all the rest is useless; I would deem myself happy, if I had convinced you of the absolute necessity of charity, especially if I could win you to practice it always. Oh, how happy the parish, how happy the family would be, if charity reigned triumphant! O God, if there is any desire in my heart, it is that charity may reign among this little flock entrusted to my care, which I love with my whole heart, and to which I desire to consecrate my cares and my life! Amen.

## III. INSTRUCTION

### On Charity towards Our Neighbor (*Concluded*)

In the last instruction I demonstrated the necessity of fraternal charity; to-day, I am going to show you its practice. Our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself taught us this when He said: *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you* (John xv. 12). Jesus Christ loved us to the extent of suffering and dying for us; our charity must, therefore, be sincere and efficacious. Jesus Christ loved us solely for our salvation; our charity must, therefore, be pure and holy. Jesus Christ loved us all and without exception, because He suffered and died for all men; our charity must, therefore, be universal.

I. Our charity must be *sincere and efficacious. Let us not love in word, nor in tongue*, says the apostle St. John, *but in deed and in truth* (John iii. 18). Our Lord says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Matt. v. 43). The love we bear to ourselves must, therefore, be the measure of the love we bear to our neighbor. We must wish and do to others what we desire that others should wish and do to us. "Therefore, let us examine," says St. Augustine, "how we love ourselves and from this let us conclude how much we should love our neighbor." Everyone loves himself, and no one likes to hear others speak ill of him; let us, therefore, never speak ill of our neighbor. Everyone wishes to raise himself to honor and fortune, to succeed in his affairs; let us, therefore, not be jealous of the honor, the fortune, and the success of others. Everyone wishes to have his faults tenderly dealt with, to be consoled in affliction and to be helped in sickness and want; let us, therefore, do to our neighbor what we wish that he should do to us.

If charity consisted only in words, or in protestations of compassion and love then, indeed, there was never a century more charitable than ours. But we must come to actions. We must make sacrifices to relieve the unfortunate, to give bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked. We must not stop at words of pity. Our actions must demonstrate our charity, else we lay ourselves open to the charge that we love our neighbor with our lips, but our heart is far from him. It is easy to love our neighbor in words, but the true test of charity lies in the sacrifice of our goods, our pleasures, and ease and comfort for

the sake of the unfortunate. Charity in words is mere egotism. Like the Jews of whom the Gospel speaks, who seeing a man lying by the road, covered with wounds and half-dead, and seeing him passed by, so do we often remain insensible to the miseries of others. Ah! my brethren, let us imitate the good Samaritan, let us prove by works that we love our neighbor as ourselves, and let us treat him as we would wish to be treated!

II. Charity must be *pure and holy*. What motives have we to love our neighbor as ourselves? We are all children of the same father who is God, members of the same body which is the Church, and because Jesus Christ, our Head, commands us to do so. Therefore, we must love all in God and for God's sake. The natural affection which we feel for certain persons, on account of their character or physical or moral qualities, is not charity. This attachment may be good, but it has its dangers. "Would it not be loving for hell," says St. Chrysostom, "if one would love another only with evil intentions and wicked designs?" Religion does not disapprove the human affection which one has for his parents, benefactors, and friends. It is a law which God has implanted in our hearts. But that natural affection, without relation to the Creator, is not what religion prescribes. To love our neighbor only with a natural and interested love would be loving him as the pagans do, and there would be no merit. "The true Christian," says St. Francis of Sales, "loves God in his neighbor, and his neighbor in God." He loves God in his neighbor, because he refers to the Creator all the affections he has for the creature, and because he loves his neighbor only on account of God. He loves his neighbor in God and for God, that is for the salvation of his soul, and because God wills it.

This is that pure and holy charity, that sacred fire which Jesus Christ came to bring upon earth. How beautiful and precious it is, and what blessings it would procure us, if we would practice it according to the example of the Saviour! But alas! where are they who truly love their neighbor? Some love, because nature inclines them to love, and their heart can no more be without love than the sun can be without heat and light. Some love only those whose character and opinions agree with their own, or those who do them good, or who are able to help them. Some love their companion in pleasure, or the accomplices in crime. They damn the souls of others they love, while damning their own. What strange charity! Is this the love

commanded by the Gospel? And are not those scandals and disorders that we see all around us, those quarrels, those family dissensions, the fruit of a perverted and criminal love? Young people of both sexes, be careful never to permit the fire of impure love to be enkindled in your hearts.

III. Charity must be *universal.* Such was the charity of our divine Saviour. He loved poor and rich, pagans and Jews; those who persecuted Him as well as those who loved Him. He suffered and died for all men. He wants us to imitate His example and love all men without distinction of character, country, condition, and even of religion. He wishes that we love the stranger, as we love our nearest and dearest neighbor, Jews, Mohammedans, and heretics, just as we love the members of our own true Church. *Thou shalt love thy neighbor* (Matt. v. 43). He excepts nobody, not even our enemy. *You have heard*, says the Saviour, *that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father that is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathen this?* (Matt. 43–47.) If, then, we desire to be true Christians, we must love all our fellow-men, without distinction. And if there were in the world only one single person, whom we did not love, we would not have charity. But you may say: How can I love those who, far from loving me, seek, on the contrary, to injure me in every possible manner? I know that the love of our enemy is something very difficult. Perhaps it is the most difficult precept of the entire Gospel. But God commands it and we must obey. But, you may say, to love my enemy I must pardon him; and if I pardon him I will be looked upon as a coward. No, my dear brother, do not believe this; on the contrary, you will be only the more respected and esteemed by all good people, for there is no greater victory, no victory more honorable than the victory over self. In the Lord's Prayer you say: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." But if you do not pardon, why do you ask to be pardoned? And by asking God to treat you as you treat your neighbor, you ask Him *not* to pardon you. You

cannot recite this prayer without condemning yourselves. In temptations to anger or revenge, look on the crucifix. Think of Christ on the cross. Can you call yourselves the disciples of a God who pardoned His very executioners and prayed for them on the cross, if you cannot forgive an injury, or even an unkind word? O cross of my Saviour, what hatreds and wraths hast Thy remembrance extinguished! It was the cross which disarmed John Gualbert, when, having met his enemy unarmed and alone in the forest, he was about to revenge himself for the murder of one of his relatives. After this victory over himself, God rewarded him with such extraordinary graces, that he became a great saint. It was the cross that caused the tomahawk to fall from the hands of a savage at the moment when he was going to strike the holy bishop of Bardstown, Monseigneur Flaget. This pious missionary uncovered his breast and showed to the Indian his crucifix, saying: "Behold the image of Him who died for you on the cross; strike, if you dare!" Instantly the savage fell at the feet of the holy bishop and asked to be baptized.

Imitate these beautiful examples and pardon your enemies, not once, but "until seventy-seven times," in the words of our Saviour, that is, always. Do not content yourselves with pardoning your enemy in your heart, but go and reconcile yourselves with him, salute him, speak with him when he desires to speak with you.

Has your charity all the marks of true Christian love? Charity must be *sincere and efficacious*. Do you give to the poor according to your means; do you bear with patience the faults of others? Charity must be *pure and holy*. Do you love everybody in God and for God's sake, or do you nourish at the bottom of your heart an impure and criminal affection? Charity must be *universal*. Do you harbor hatred against any one? Do you love everyone as you love yourselves? Do you wish to everyone the same good which you desire for yourselves?

St. Paul enumerates the qualities of true charity: *Charity is patient and full of kindness; it envies not; it is not puffed up, it is not ambitious and seeks not its own; it provokes not to anger, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices with the truth; it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things* (I. Cor. XIII. 4–7).

May God grant that your charity be such, and that after having been united by the bonds of an intimate charity here on earth, you may love one another in a happy eternity. Amen.

## IV. INSTRUCTION

### On Charity — Works of Mercy

After having spoken to you of the necessity of fraternal charity, and of the qualities it should have, there remains for us to instruct you on the works of mercy which it prescribes. These works are of two kinds: corporal and spiritual. The first are seven in number: 1st. To feed the hungry; 2d. To give drink to the thirsty; 3d. To clothe the naked; 4th. To visit the imprisoned; 5th. To harbor the harborless; 6th. To visit the sick; 7th. To bury the dead.

I. As to the last work of mercy, burying the dead, we cannot have praise enough for the zeal of persons who are ready to assist at this sad and pious duty. It is an act of charity which can be of great merit before God, if it is fulfilled with Christian views. Holy Scripture teaches us that, through the care he took to bury the dead, the holy man Tobias merited an angel to descend from heaven to accompany his son on a journey to a distant country. It is also a laudable custom to accompany the dead to their last abode. Is it not the last service which you can render to a relative, a friend, or a benefactor? But in doing so you should not be guided by a sentiment of propriety, but by a spirit of true piety which moves you to join your prayers with those of the Church for the repose of the departed.

II. The sixth work of mercy is *visiting the sick*, especially those who are in need of assistance. I do not need to insist on the necessity and advantages of these visits. Our Lord tells us that by visiting those who suffer, we visit Him. *I was sick and you visited me* (Matt. xxv. 36). If charity requires us to assist the poor who are well, and who can help themselves, with much more reason ought it to lead us to aid those who cannot leave their home on account of sickness or infirmities. But in order that these visits may be useful, they should not be visits of mere benevolence or human respect, still less of pastime, or tiresome visits, which, on account of their length or their inopportuneness contribute often only to increase the fatigue and sufferings of the sick. They should be inspired by a sincere charity, and should be made with a view of advancing both the spiritual and corporal good of the sick person. If the sick person is poor — and it is especially to the poor that visits are useful — you should

inform yourselves about his needs. See that he has proper food and the means to procure the remedies that are necessary for him; that he has wood or coal to keep himself warm, clothing to cover himself both day and night, and that he has some one to attend to him. If the person you visit is in no need of help for the body, you can always do good to him spiritually. If he is pious and a practical Christian, he will listen with pleasure and gratitude to the words of edification you speak to him; if he is a sinner, perhaps it will be necessary for you to remind him of his last end, to exhort him to go to confession. . . . Often one word of a devoted friend helps more than all the exhortations of the priest.

III. The four works of mercy which concern *food*, *drink*, *clothing*, and *lodging*, are all comprised under the common term of alms. I shall not speak of the fourth work: *To visit the imprisoned*, because we live in a country where there is hardly any occasion for it.

1st. *Almsgiving and Its Necessity.*—You would deceive yourselves greatly, my brethren, if you were to believe almsgiving is only a work of counsel, and a mark of high perfection. It is a strict and indispensable duty prescribed to us both by the natural and by the divine law. What does natural law or simple reason teach us? That we are all brethren, all made of the same clay, all the children of the same Father. Should we not, therefore, have compassion for the miseries of one another? And if any one were to remain insensible to the sufferings of others, would he not prove that he has no heart and that he is unworthy of the quality of man? What, again, does reason tell us? That we must do to others as we wish them to do to us. Who is the one, who, being in need, is not glad when another assists him? There is nothing more formal in Holy Scripture than the obligation which God imposes upon us to give alms. *I command thee to open thy hand to the needy*, says God in the book of Deuteronomy (xv. 11). I command thee: hence it is not a simple counsel, but a precept. In another place God tells us that we must not *defraud the poor of alms* (Eccl. iv. 1); as if charity were a sacred debt to the poor which we cannot deny him without committing a great injustice. The sentence which our Lord Jesus Christ shall pronounce on the day of judgment is especially striking. Addressing first those at His right hand, He will say to them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you

gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; I was in prison, and you came to see me." . . . And then turning to those at His left hand, He shall say to them: "Depart from me, you cursed . . . for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me not in; naked, and you covered me not; sick and in prison, and you visited me not." And then the wicked shall answer: "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?" And the sovereign judge shall answer them: *Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least ones, neither did you do it to me* (Matt. xxv. 34–45).

After such words, my brethren, can one still have any doubt of the necessity of giving alms, since it is principally upon charity that our Lord makes our salvation or our loss depend?

You may answer: "I cannot give alms because my property, my narrow circumstances, do not permit me." If you cannot do it, undoubtedly God will not oblige you to do it. But is this not very often an idle pretext? Do you not find money for your vanities, your dress, or even for saloons and theatres? You find means to satisfy your whims and all your sensualities; why should you not, also, find the means to assist those who are dying of hunger and cold? You may answer me: "But I have a large family, and I would not like to reduce my children to want." Do not be afraid, says St. Cyprian, for if God takes care of the little birds, how much more will He help those who help Him in the person of the poor? Remember, also, that experience has proved that after an avaricious father often follow squandering children. Moreover, if you have children, you should give them the example of giving alms. "But," you say, "the poor deceive us so often by their appearance." If there are beggars who are not poor, must those who are really poor be victims of the lies and deceits of others? What must you give in alms, and what should be the measure of your charity? I answer to you in the words of Tobias to his son: "If you have little, give little; but if you have much, give much." Do not deprive yourselves of what is necessary, but in what is superfluous give as much as you can.

2d. *Advantages.*— Do not believe that all that you give to the poor is lost to you. The proverb says that "alms do not make poor." This

was even acknowledged by pagan philosophers, and especially by an Emperor, a sworn enemy of Christianity, Julian the Apostate, who said: "Show me a man who has become poor through alms. My almsgiving has always enriched me, in spite of my generosity." And how many among you, perhaps, could say the same? God blesses generous and charitable souls. He blesses their fields, their flocks, as He formerly blessed the oil and flour of the widow of Sarepta. This woman, in a time of famine, had only a handful of flour and a little oil in a vessel. Nevertheless, she shared it with the prophet Elias, and God, touched by her charity, miraculously multiplied the oil and flour in such a manner that it did not diminish, although she used it every day for herself and her son. Add to this the spiritual advantages which almsgiving procures us. In reward for her alms, a pious woman named Tabitha, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, merited, after her death, to be raised to life again. For the same reason, the centurion Cornelius was the first Gentile called to the knowledge of the Gospel. There is also nothing more powerful than almsgiving to merit for us the grace of conversion and salvation. Hence the words of Holy Scripture, that *alms deliver from all sin* (Tob. IV. 11). And do you count as nothing the consolations which almsgiving procures to us? What happiness you feel when you have relieved some unfortunate! How happy the rich man feels when he is blessed and loved by the poor and the sick!

3d. *Conditions.*— I need not insist any further on the obligation and advantages of almsgiving, for I know that in this congregation the poor and unfortunate find ready help. How should almsgiving be practiced in order to be meritorious? My brethren, always give alms for God and with the view to please God. See Jesus Christ in the person of the poor, for God rewards only what one does for Himself and out of love for Him. Give alms without ostentation and without seeking to be seen; otherwise you have received already your reward here below: *When thou dost give alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth* (Matt. VI. 3). Give alms without murmuring, for, says St. Augustine, when you help unwillingly and only to free yourselves from the importunities of the poor, you lose both your alms and the merit you could have had in giving it. Give alms with judgment, that is, to those who are really in need; do not give to those who, by labor and proper economy, could easily furnish themselves what they need. In the distribution of your alms,

always prefer the bashful poor to beggars, good people to bad people, natives to strangers, and relatives and neighbors to outsiders.

May God grant that my words fall upon good ground, and that the divine seed may bring forth its fruit! Amen.

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## V. INSTRUCTION

### On Charity — Works of Mercy (*Concluded*)

If the corporal works of mercy are very meritorious, then the spiritual works of mercy are indeed much more meritorious, as the soul is far more precious than the body, and spiritual goods infinitely more precious than temporal goods.

The spiritual works of mercy are seven in number: 1st. To instruct the ignorant; 2d. To warn the sinners; 3d. To counsel the doubtful; 4th. To comfort the sorrowful; 5th. To bear wrong patiently; 6th. To forgive injuries; 7th. To pray for the living and the dead.

1st. *The Instruction of the Ignorant.*— This is a duty especially of parents in regard to their children, and of masters in regard to their domestics. They are obliged to this both by their state and by charity. They would sin doubly before God, if they did not fulfill this duty. Therefore, they are bound to have those under their charge instructed in the Christian doctrine, and to see that they attend the instructions given in the parish church or Catholic school. What parents and masters are obliged to do by their state of life, all Christians should do by charity. Is it not, indeed, a work of the greatest charity to teach the poor and the ignorant to know God and to serve Him? He who fulfills this duty well, will be great in the kingdom of heaven, for the Gospel tells us: *He that shall do and teach shall be great in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 19). How many poor and abandoned children there are, especially in cities, who cannot frequent the schools, and whose parents are too ignorant to teach them anything! If somebody did not perform this good work, what would become of these poor children? Who would teach them the things

necessary for the salvation of their souls? Hence there are circumstances and particular situations where one is strictly bound by the great law of charity to teach and explain the catechism to those who are ignorant of it.

2d. *Correction of Sinners.*— The wise man says in Ecclesiasticus: *And He gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor* (Eccl. XVII. 12). The Lord has commanded each one of us to interest himself in the salvation of his brethren. Our divine Saviour gave us a formal commandment when He said: *If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother* (Matt. XVIII. 15). If charity obliges us to relieve the corporal miseries of our neighbor, why should it not oblige us to relieve his spiritual miseries, if we are able? To alleviate the temporal miseries of one's neighbor, and remain indifferent to his spiritual wants, would be like saving a man's furniture from the fire, but letting the man himself burn to death. The saints were always zealous for the salvation of souls. St. Ignatius of Loyola said that, even if he had one foot already in heaven, he would prefer not to enter, if a sinner upon earth should present himself to be converted. St. Theresa declared that, to gain a soul for God, not only would she give her own life, but would even resign herself to the flames of Purgatory until the end of the world. "What folly!" cries out St. Bernard, "an animal falls down and people hasten to raise it up again; a soul falls into the mire of vice, and no one moves to assist it."

We are obliged, under pain of sin, to admonish our neighbor of his faults; and a neglect of this duty might be even a mortal sin, if the fault is grievous, and if we think that, by a charitable advice, we can hinder the sin.

Who are more especially bound to the precept of fraternal correction? They are the pastors in regard to their flocks, parents in regard to their children, teachers in regard to their pupils, and masters in regard to their servants. For all these it is not only a duty of charity, but also a duty of their state of life. We shall speak more at length of this in the fourth commandment. This obligation, however, is not only binding on superiors, but also on equals, and generally on every one. The evil to be hindered, or the disorder to be corrected, must be grievous before correction is attempted, and especially it must be certain that the correction will produce a good effect.

Fraternal correction is one of the most delicate points of the evangelical teaching. Many fail in this duty, either because they do not do it when they ought to do it, or because they do it badly. If some one commits a fault in your presence, or utters indecent or impious words, and if you are his superior in age or position, you must admonish and reprove him. Even if you were only his equal, you should still correct him, if you believe that your advice will be salutary. On the contrary, if the person is older than you, more instructed, of a more elevated rank, and you are sure that he would laugh at your remonstrance, or that he will speak or act the worse, then keep quiet; but do not countenance his conduct or language by your presence. Leave his company if you can conveniently do so. If you cannot, then show by your cold and serious behavior the pain you feel at his conduct.

But you must correct sinners with prudence and discretion; for, says St. Gregory, the same admonition does not suit every class of persons. Therefore, suit your correction to the time, the place, the age of the person, his character, and to all the different circumstances. Admonish children differently from older people; the poor differently from the rich. In some cases one word said opportunely will be sufficient, whilst in others, severe lectures and rebukes are required. Again, the correction should be made privately, in order to spare confusion to the guilty. Public rebukes seldom do good, except when private admonitions would be useless and when it is necessary to counteract and repair public scandal. Lastly, correction must be made with kindness. Harshness and bitter words serve merely to exasperate the guilty. However, this kindness must not exclude firmness. Our Saviour gave us an example of firmness, when, with the whip in hand, he drove out the merchants and money-changers who profaned the temple.

Correction must be received with docility, with humility, and with gratitude. If you had on your face a spot which rendered you hideous or ridiculous, would you not be glad if some one drew your attention to it? Why, therefore, do you become angry when attention is drawn to the spots on your soul? The best friend we can have in this world is the one who admonishes us unsparingly of our faults. St. Gregory the Great did not acknowledge any other kind of friend; and St. Louis, a bishop of Toulouse, in France, used to have religious accompany him everywhere to reprove him for his faults.

The third work of mercy is *to counsel the doubtful.* The fourth *to comfort the sorrowful.* Everybody can easily understand these, and they need no explanation.

The fifth work of mercy is *to bear with patience the injuries and faults of others* or of our neighbor. Our neighbor may have faults of mind, of heart, or of body, defects of memory and intelligence, vices and evil habits, a difficult character, or an irritable temper. Indeed, we have much to suffer from the part of persons with whom we are obliged to live. It may be a husband who dissipates in foolish expenses the little he gains, whilst, at home, his wife and little children are suffering with hunger; a negligent and lazy wife, who does not take care of her household; a disobedient and intemperate son; a vain and worldly daughter, who listens to nobody, and laughs at the advices and counsels of her parents; a cross mother-in-law; a proud and haughty daughter-in-law, who has no regard for the age or infirmities of her aged parents; a neighbor who cannot bear the least word and is always disposed to complain, to criticize, and to blame.

We must be patient with them all. We must bear with the faults of others as we wish that others should bear with us. St. Paul says: *Bear ye one another's burden* (Gal. VI. 2). Our reason tells us, that being all members of one and the same body, we must have compassion upon the miseries and infirmities of one another. Do not say that it is impossible for you to bear patiently with such a fault or such a person; with God's grace you can do it if you wish; you only need to ask for patience. Moreover, we are obliged to suffer the faults of those persons that surround us, whether we will or not; only if you suffer them with patience, you can lay up treasures of merit for heaven; whilst, on the other hand, you offend God by giving yourselves up to impatience and anger; you destroy peace and union in the family, which is the most solid and true happiness of life. A pious lady had, out of charity, given shelter to a poor woman who had an unbearable temper. Tired of her faults, she was one day on the point of sending her away, but she went first to consult St. Anthony. Do not do it, said the Saint to her, for you would lose thereby all the merit which, through your patience and charity, she caused you to gain. What a happy change would take place in your households, if everyone would bear with the faults of his neighbor; if the mother of the family would be kind and patient towards her husband, and the husband more reasonable and more indulgent towards his

wife; if the children would always show themselves obedient and respectful towards their parents; if servants would love their masters and forget little wrongs, and if masters, in their turn, had patience with their servants! The family ties and neighborly relations which should form the charm of life, are, on the contrary, often only the sources of torment and unhappiness, and the fountain of misery and sadness.

The sixth work of mercy is *to forgive offenses.* We have spoken of this at length in another place. As regards the last, it is sufficient for me to recall it to your mind: *To pray for the living and the dead.* Such are, therefore, my brethren, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. I pray to God to give you the grace to put them in practice. Charity, as we have said, in commencing the series of instructions, is the first and greatest of all virtues; charity is the whole Gospel. Practice charity towards God and towards your neighbor, and you will fulfill all the obligations of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, your life will be found full of good works, and you will receive in heaven a reward without end. Amen.

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## VI. INSTRUCTION

### On Mortal Sin

Sin is any thought, word, action, or omission contrary to the commandments of God or of the Church.

You sin every time you perform a forbidden action or hold forbidden discourses, every time you omit duties prescribed by the commandments, or entertain thoughts or desires contrary to the law of God. It is, therefore, not only by action or omission we may sin, but also by thoughts and desires.

There are two kinds of sin: *Original* sin, which we all have inherited from Adam, our first father, and *actual* sin, which we commit of our own free will.

Actual sin is of two kinds: *mortal* sin and *venial* sin.

Mortal sin deprives the soul of its life, by causing it to lose God's grace which is its true life. In the soul there are two kinds of life,

natural life and the life of grace, which is God's friendship. Our soul cannot lose natural life, because it is immortal, but it can lose the life of grace, if it has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin.

Let us now try to understand the ugliness of mortal sin and the horror we should have for it. Few persons seem to be sufficiently instructed in this matter, or, rather, few seem to appreciate the enormity of sin. To have some idea of the enormity of mortal sin, you only need to consider it as the greatest evil in the eyes of God, and as the greatest evil that can befall man.

I. Sin is the greatest evil in the eyes of God; because it contains in itself a threefold malice of impiety, of revolt, and of the blackest ingratitude.

1st. The degree of an injury is measured by the condition of the one who offends, and by the dignity of the one who is offended. What would be only a slight failing against a simple individual may become a capital crime in regard to a king or an emperor. Now, who is the God that is outraged by the sin of man, and what is man who outrages God by sin? Our mind loses itself, our imagination becomes confused in contemplating the immense interval that separates God from man. God, the Creator and Master of all, before whom all that exists is as if it did not exist; and man, weak and frail creature, formed out of the slime of the earth and whom one breath of God can destroy! God, the eternal and unchangeable Being, who fills heaven and earth with His majesty, who created all things by a single word and who could annihilate everything by a single word in the same manner; and man, who is only of yesterday, who will no longer be by to-morrow, and who hardly occupies a perceptible place in space! God, infinite in holiness and in all perfections; and man who is nothing else but an abyss of corruption and miseries. And man, that pitiful creature, that atom and nothing, dares to outrage his God, to insult His infinite majesty, not through ignorance or weakness, but through malice, with deliberate purpose and out of mere wantonness, not once, but thousands and thousands of times, even though he knows that this same God whom he offends is present everywhere and is the invisible witness of his actions, even the most secret. And why does he thus outrage God, the source of all good — goodness itself? For some frivolous interest or for the pleasure of a moment! Can one imagine greater malice and more shameful impiety?

2d. I have added that sin is *a rebellion against God.*

Everything in nature claims the obedience which we owe to the Creator. From the beginning of the world God spoke, and the universe came forth from nothing. He called the stars, and the stars took their place in rank like an army in battle array. He spoke to the sea: "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther"; and the sea, always respectful and obedient, breaks its pride against a bulwark of sand. He commanded the earth to cover itself with flowers and fruits; and the earth, that fruitful mother, is to this day inexhaustible in its bounty, and its bosom is still filled with the richest treasures.

In the midst of this unanimous concert of homage and praise, what does man do, man the only reasonable creature, man the only one capable of knowing and loving his Creator? From the height of Sinai, God gives man ten commandments, and says to him: *Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and thou shalt serve him alone. Thou shalt not take my name in vain, and thou shalt not profane it through impiety and blasphemy. Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Thou shalt respect the life, the honor, and the goods of thy neighbor. Thou shalt not commit fornication nor uncleanliness.* And what does man answer? He answers, if not in words at least in act, that he will not acknowledge the authority of his Creator, and that he does not want to be subject to Him, that he intends to obey only his passions, and be the slave of his caprices. But, says the Lord: Am I not thy God and thy Master? No! answers the sinner, the God I adore is avarice, licentiousness, the goods and pleasures of this world, and I do not acknowledge any other master. *I shall not serve thee* (Jer. II. 20). But beware, sinner, and remember that by revolting thus against thy God and Creator, thou wilt provoke His wrath and expose thyself to all kinds of evil. No matter: I wish to enjoy life, I wish to content and satisfy my passions; actual happiness is all that I want; I do not care about the rest. *I shall not serve thee.*

What audacity, what temerity, what folly! Imagine a little worm that revolts against the foot that is going to crush it; or represent to yourselves a man suspended on the brink of an abyss, and who seeks to repel the hand that tries to save him. Oh, sinner, wilt thou commence to understand the blindness and perversity of thy conduct?

3d. What completes the enormity of sin is its *character of ingratitude.* Listen to a parable which gives us an idea of this:—

A man of very low station was condemned to death for the crime of high treason. Already the instrument of execution was ready and

soon the fatal hour was to strike. The son of the king appears before his august father and asks pardon for the condemned man. The father, although a merciful man, answers that justice must be done, and that the good of society demands that the crime should not remain unpunished. "But," answers the son, "if there must be a victim, I myself shall die instead of the guilty man. Let his life be pardoned rather than mine." The father consents to the sacrifice, although the victim is his only son, the object of all his love. The prince hastens to the place of execution, and he finds the criminal already bound hand and foot on the scaffold. The hangman is ready to spring the fatal trap: "Stop," the prince cries out, "it is not he but I that must die." . . . You expect the criminal to throw himself at the feet of his benefactor, and protest that he will not permit the innocent to die for the guilty. But no, the monster helps to bind the king's son, hands and feet, places him on the fatal trap and helps to execute him!

You shudder, you are seized with indignation. Turn this indignation against yourselves, for it is you, it is your sins which crucified, not a prince of the earth, but the Son of God who came to give you life. It is your sins that nailed Him to the cross and made Him spill the last drop of His blood. And you have renewed this execution every time you committed a mortal sin. You have trampled under foot the sacred blood He shed for you. "Ah!" said St. Mary Magdalen, of Pazzi, on her deathbed, "I must leave this world without having been able to understand a frightful mystery, without understanding how any one can commit sin which cost the blood of God!" Do you understand, my brethren, how a Christian who has faith and reason can carry his ingratitude and malice to the point of crucifying anew this adorable Saviour who became flesh for us, who humbled Himself for us, who gave Himself up to death out of love for us?

The outrage which sin causes God is infinite, and we may well pity the one who is not seized with horror for such a frightful evil, the sovereign evil, the greatest of all evils, or rather the only evil in the world. What should also contribute to make us detest sin, is the wrong which it causes to ourselves.

II. I will not insist on the physical evils which sin draws down upon us already in this life. You all know that it was sin which, from the beginning, introduced into this world death, illness, and all the miseries that inflict us. When all mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, were engulfed in the waters of the Deluge, when

the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrha were consumed by a rain of fire and brimstone; when war, pestilence, famine, and so many other plagues of divine wrath ravaged the earth, it was always sin that was the cause. But all these temporal evils are as nothing in comparison with the evil which sin causes to the soul.

What was the state of our soul before committing sin? Clothed with the garment of innocence, it was white as snow, brilliant as the sun; but once it was soiled by sin it lost all its beauty and became an object of horror. Before sin, it enjoyed the sweet friendship of its God, who was pleased to dwell in it and overwhelm it with favors; but since its sin, it is an object of hatred and execration in the eyes of God. God withdrew Himself from the soul; the devil replaced Him, and reigns as master, and holds it as his captive, as his slave.

Not only does sin degrade the soul and make of it a hideous corpse, whose sight we could not bear, but it robs the soul of all the goods which it had acquired, and despoils it of all its merits. By prayers, mortifications, and good works, the soul had woven around its brow a magnificent crown for a happy eternity; heaven with all its joys and with all its delights was to be its reward; but from the moment it had the misfortune to fall into mortal sin, it lost all its rights to the celestial inheritance, and if it happened to die in this sad state, it would receive no reward for its virtues and merits. Yes, my brethren, even if the soul had led a penitential life as austere as that of the anchorites in the deserts, as humble and chaste as that of virgins in the cloisters, if it should fall into mortal sin before its last breath, all would be lost and lost forever! Think of a traveler, loaded with riches, who has come from a distant country, and succeeded in crossing the seas, being shipwrecked just as he enters the harbor! Think of a farmer who, on account of a violent storm, has the misfortune to lose his whole harvest on the very day he is going to reap it! Such is the lot of the sinner who, after long years of virtues and merits, commits a mortal sin and dies in this deplorable state! It is true, if he does penance, all his merits will be restored to him; but if he does not repent, all is lost forever. Oh, the frightful ravages of sin in a soul! Oh, the blindness and the insensibility of the sinner!

Nor is this all. Not only does sin rob the soul of its merits, but makes it impossible to acquire new ones. The state of sin is a state of death, and in a state of death no one can perform any acts of life. By sin you break your union with Jesus Christ, you are cut off from

the stem and become similar to branches which are separated from the stem and can bear fruit no longer. Are, then, the prayers and good works of the sinner void in the eyes of God? No, God forbid; but as long as one is in sin, one can do nothing meritorious for heaven. Thus, whilst a glass of water given to a poor man can obtain for you an eternal happiness, if you do this trifling action in the state of grace, on the contrary, all the fasts, and all the alms, and all the prayers you may do, avail nothing if they are performed in the state of mortal sin.

For the soul which has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin, all is not limited, alas! to the loss of an eternity of happiness. By losing heaven, you deserve hell; if you die in the state of mortal sin, even though you had committed only one mortal sin, you are lost forever; forever deprived of the sight of God and His glory, forever consigned to avenging fire, to rage and despair, in the horrible sojourn of the damned!

Do you think of this, my brethren, when you give yourselves up to sin? For a moment of pleasure, for a mere nothing, you expose yourselves to lose an eternity of unspeakable happiness and to fall into an eternity of misfortune! Ah! how different was the conduct of the saints! Consider the martyrs in the midst of their torments, the anchorites in the depths of deserts, the virgins in the cloisters! Why did they sacrifice their liberty, the honors and pleasures of the world? Why did they sacrifice their very life, if it were not to avoid sin and the danger of committing it? Great threats were once made against St. John Chrysostom, because he refused to grant the Empress Eudoxia what she demanded: "Go," he answered to the courtiers, "tell the Empress that John is afraid of only one thing, sin." "My son," Queen Blanche used to say to her child, who was to become the great King St. Louis, "thou knowest how much I love thee, and, nevertheless, I would prefer to see thee dead at my feet, rather than to know thee guilty of one mortal sin." St. Edward, St. Anselm, and St. Catharine of Genoa said that if they were in a sea of molten lead and could leave it only under the condition of committing a mortal sin, they would prefer to remain in it than to be delivered from it at this price.

After the example of the saints, my brethren, flee from sin as the greatest evil in the world, and be ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself, rather than ever commit one mortal sin. Amen.

## VII. INSTRUCTION

### On Venial Sin

Venial sin is a sin which does not cause death to the soul, but which lessens charity and disposes the soul to mortal sin.

The word *venial* (from the Latin *venia*, pardon) signifies pardonable. This sin is so called, either because God pardons it more easily than mortal sin, or because he has given us a greater number of means to purify ourselves from it, such as confession, even without absolution, holy communion, alms, holy water, etc.

It is not easy in many cases, as the most learned theologians teach, to distinguish venial sin from mortal sin. The only rule is, that for mortal sin, two conditions are needed: Grievousness of matter and perfect consent. The matter is grievous when the sin is a serious offense against God, against our neighbor, or against ourselves; and the consent is perfect, if the evil is done with full and entire reflection. If one of these two conditions is wanting, the sin is regarded only as venial. Venial sin, however, may become mortal through a false conscience, an evil intention, or on account of the scandal that follows. If some one were to commit a venial sin with full deliberation, thinking it were a mortal sin; or in stealing a small piece of money, he had the intention of stealing a much larger one; or if by loose words or actions, even though not obscene enough to constitute a grievous matter, one should scandalize his neighbor — in each case the sin, though seemingly venial, would become mortal.

There are two kinds of venial sins: venial sins of weakness, which are committed through ignorance or inadvertence, and venial sins committed with deliberate intention, through negligence, malice, or through the effect of a bad habit.

As to the venial sins of weakness, we should try to avoid them; but as they are inseparable from human frailty, we must not expect to be free of them altogether: *A just man falls seven times (a day)* (Prov. xxiv. 16), says the Holy Ghost. Only the Blessed Virgin Mary, by a special privilege, was exempt from even the least venial sin.

But venial sins committed with full deliberation are not so pardonable, for we can easily avoid them with God's grace. Generally speaking, we are far from having for deliberate venial sin all the

horror it merits. To convince ourselves of this, let us consider venial sin in regard to the injury it does to God, and in regard to the evil it causes to the soul that commits it.

I. God is our father and friend, the best of friends and the most tender of fathers. Under this title He has a right to our obedience and our love.

In His quality of father, He imposes laws upon us. Can we refuse to obey them? Although He does not require their fulfillment under pain of incurring eternal punishment, is it not always an injury we commit against Him in refusing to obey His laws? What would you say of a child that would be content to obey his father only when the father threatens him with exclusion from home, or with the privation of his inheritance? You would say that such a child has an evil heart, that he has neither love nor respect for his father, and that certainly he merits the most severe reproaches and punishments. It is the same with us, my brethren, if we do not scruple to commit venial faults. We offend God who is our Heavenly Father, we afflict His heart, and expose ourselves to His wrath.

But God is not only our Father, He is also our friend, and the best of all friends. He gives us striking proofs of this by the numberless favors and graces with which He overwhelms us every day. What pain, therefore, must we not cause Him if, instead of rendering Him love for love, we show Him coldness and indifference, and when we do not scruple in the least to displease and offend Him.

Nothing can give us a better idea of the injury which venial sin causes to God than the manner in which He has punished it in certain circumstances. Moses, the friend and the intimate confidant of God, was forbidden to enter the Promised Land, on account of a slight mistrust of God. Oza touched the Ark of the Covenant to prevent it from falling, and was struck with instant death; fifty thousand Bethsamites lost their lives because they had looked irreverently on the Ark of the Covenant; David beheld his kingdom afflicted with cruel pestilence because through vanity he had ordered a census of his subjects; Ananias and Saphira fell dead at the feet of the apostles for having told them a lie.

These are frightful examples of divine justice, but they are not astonishing if we compare them with the penalty which God reserves, in the future life, for venial faults. *Nothing defiled can enter the kingdom of heaven.* If you die before having satisfied for venial sins,

you will have to expiate them in the flames of purgatory. And what are all the evils of this world, what are all the most frightful diseases, what are all the most violent torments, compared with the pains of purgatory?

Will you, then, maintain that venial faults are trifling things? Will you say that lies, petty vanities, anger, slight distractions, negligence in prayer, small injustices, irreverence in church, light words, slight infractions of the law of fast and abstinence, and other similar failings, amount to nothing? Ah, my brethren, this is not the teaching of the Doctors of the Church, who believe that after mortal sin there is no greater evil upon earth than venial sin, and that it is never permitted to commit a venial sin, even to preserve honor and life. They go still further and declare that even if by one single venial sin, the fire of hell could be extinguished, and all the damned souls brought to heaven, one would not be permitted to commit it. The reason is, because it is never permitted to do evil that good may result, and sin, however small it may be, attacks God, and is opposed to His adorable perfections, and, however slight it may be, it robs Him of more glory than all our virtues and all our merits can procure from Him. Hence that horror which the saints always had for wilful venial sin. It is related of Maria Theresa, Queen of France and wife of Louis XIV., that having fallen into a sin for which she reproached herself most bitterly, her attendants wished to quiet her by saying that it was only a venial fault: "No matter," she answered, sobbing, "God is offended, and it is mortal for my heart."

II. Let us consider it in regard to the evil which it causes to the soul that commits it. The effect of habitual venial sin upon the soul is a state of lukewarmness and the disposition to mortal sin.

First, *the state of lukewarmness*. If a friend treat his friend with coldness and criticize him, laugh at him and mock him, surely his friend will begin to avoid and gradually break off all relations with him. Such is the conduct of God in our regard. When He sees that we limit ourselves to the essential duties, and that we trouble ourselves little about the others, that we have for Him no longer that tender and generous love which made us so agreeable in His eyes, that we consider it as a trifle to displease Him, when we offend Him, and under the most frivolous pretexts, then He separates Himself also from us, He withdraws from us a part of His graces, He diminishes His favors, and abandons us, to a certain extent, to our weakness and

frailty. Now, what can such a soul do abandoned by God and deprived of those graces which until now had assured its perseverance? Like a plant which a negligent gardener fails to water, the soul soon falls into languor and dryness, it looses the taste for piety, it abandons prayer, it practices no longer that recollection, that flight from the world, that vigilance, that mortification so necessary to make progress in the ways of God, and ends by falling into the most deplorable lukewarmness. Indeed, lukewarm souls that listen to me, since when did you begin to abandon frequent confession and communion? Since when have you that disgust of prayer, that dissipation and worldliness that marks your whole exterior? It is since the time the spirit of God separated itself from you after you had separated yourselves from Him; it is since the unfortunate habit of committing venial sins.

The evil which venial sin causes does not stop here, and from the state of lukewarmness into which it has plunged the soul it is seldom that it does not drive it into mortal sin. "One does not become wicked all at once," says St. Bernard; "great vices have their beginnings as well as great virtues." But by becoming familiarized with evil, one ends by giving oneself up to it without remorse and without scruple; according to the measure one satisfies his appetite, the appetite increases, and the soul thus dragged slowly towards the abyss, finally hurls itself into it, and often even without the least suspicion.

The devil on his part is very careful not to tempt us at first to great sins. He insinuates himself into us little by little; he commences by persuading us that it is quite a small matter to miss a prayer, to tell a lie, to entertain certain intimacies with persons of the other sex, to permit oneself certain familiarities with them which do not appear to be very guilty. And when the enemy of our salvation has succeeded in calming our conscience about these first faults, he tempts us to commit greater ones, he ensnares us more and more in his nets, and leads us on to the most frightful excesses.

It is thus, my brethren, that an illnesss, light at first, often becomes grave and mortal after it is neglected. It is thus that a spark not extinguished soon enkindles a great fire: *Behold, how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth!* (James III. 5.) It is thus that a house falls into ruin, if a small leak in the roof is not repaired: it is thus that a vessel which admits a little water soon becomes shipwrecked. Ah, how many saints have fallen most deplorably, how many defenders of the faith have become apostates, how many religious have abandoned

the cloister and become the scandal of the world for having neglected small things! *Behold, how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth!*

I could quote many examples both of sacred and profane history, but we need not look at history. Glance around you. How is it that such a person who was once so zealous, has to-day abandoned himself altogether to sin? How is it that some who once edified us so much during a mission, in a retreat, at the forty hours, are worse than they were before? Because they did not watch over themselves, because they were not careful to avoid little faults. *Behold, how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth!*

I conjure you, my brethren, to take the firm resolution of avoiding venial sin with the greatest care, and to try to correct yourselves of all evil habits you may have contracted in the past. Be careful to examine your conscience, to declare in your confessions even the faults which seem to you very slight, and impose upon yourselves some penance when you commit them anew. Devote a few moments every day to prayer, to pious reading, to meditation; frequent the sacraments. Practice watchfulness and mortification, fly the world, avoid dissipation and dangerous company; and though you cannot preserve yourselves entirely from venial sins, you will avoid at least a great number of them, and you will not fall into the habit of venial sin. You will assure your perseverance in good, you will acquire treasures of merit for a happy eternity, which I wish to you all. Amen.

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## VIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Capital Sins—On Pride

There are seven capital sins: pride, covetousness, lust, envy, anger, gluttony, and sloth.

We call them capital sins, because each of them is the source of several others. However, these sins are not always mortal; they are mortal only when the matter is grievous and when the consent is perfect. It is important to be instructed about the nature and malice of the seven capital sins, as well as about the remedies to employ in

correcting ourselves of them, because there is always one which dominates in us and from it arise almost all the faults to which we are subject. This is what we call the *predominant* vice or passion, a passion which we cannot combat with too great force and constancy, for on the issue of this combat depends our salvation.

I. *What Is Pride?* — Pride is an inordinate love of ourselves, which moves us to think too much of ourselves, to prefer ourselves to others, and to attribute to ourselves what comes from God. In other words, it is a disorderly love of ourselves and of our good qualities, true or supposed, which makes us esteem ourselves more than others and always desire to be elevated above them. Undoubtedly, it is not forbidden to love oneself, and it would be impossible not to do so, for it is as natural to man to love himself as it is to breathe. So, also, it is not forbidden to esteem in oneself all that is really estimable; and all that we have received from God is certainly worthy of esteem, but this love of ourselves must be regulated, it must be kept within proper limits and must be subordinated to the duties either towards God or towards our neighbor. We may sin through pride in five ways: 1st. By glorying in the natural or supernatural advantages we possess; 2d. By regarding them as a reward of our own merits; 3d. By attributing to ourselves what is due to God; 4th. By claiming advantages which we have not and seeking to make others believe that we possess them; 5th. By despising others. These five ways are so many degrees or aggravating circumstances which render us more and more criminal before God. Thus, you, who are rich, or illustrious by birth, you glory in yourself, you esteem yourself on account of your fortune or origin; you, man of talent and learning, you pride yourself on your knowledge and talents; you, worldly woman, are proud of your agreeable exterior; or you, young man, proud of your strength; you, mechanic, proud of your success in your art and industry, etc., you all sin through pride. This vain complacency in yourselves, this self-sufficiency, is the first degree of pride. If you go so far as to persuade yourselves that to you, alone, belongs the merit of all these advantages of fortune, birth, talent, beauty, strength, and industry, that God has nothing to do with them, that you are indebted for them to yourself alone, that they are due to your skill, to your industry or by a right of heritage, you fall into the second and even into the third degree of pride, and your fault becomes much more grievous. But your pride will become criminal and odious, and you will arrive at the fourth and fifth degree

of this vice, if, full of illusion and blindness, you glorify yourselves on account of the gifts which you have not received, of qualities which you do not possess, and if you despise your neighbor, because you believe him less talented than you and not enjoying the same advantages.

II. Pride gives rise to several other vices, the principal of which are vain glory or vanity, boasting, hypocrisy, ambition, and stubbornness.

1st. *Vain Glory or Vanity.*—A proud person does not generally content himself with being pleased with himself and with his true or supposed qualities; he also desires that others should acknowledge and admire them. Not content with esteeming and adoring himself, so to say, he also wishes that everybody else should have the same opinion and esteem of him. It is the vice of those rich ones who display with so much complacency the luxury of their garments, their apartments, and their furniture. It is the vice of the literary man who seeks to parade his talents and science. It is especially the vice of young girls, who dream only of toilets and dresses, and who seek only to attract the gaze of others. Undoubtedly, it would be unjust to reproach all maidens with this vanity. I am pleased to acknowledge that many are really humble and edifying by their simplicity and modesty. But how many are there who do not resist that spirit of vanity towards which they are so naturally inclined! How many are there given up entirely to frivolity and fashion, who speak of nothing else, who only long for Sunday and holy days in order to display all the luxury of their dresses, and who, even in church, seek only to see and to be seen! At all times, luxury has reigned in the world; but I may truly say that never before has it taken such frightful proportions. To-day all classes of society are confused. The poor hired girl wishes to appear like the daughter of the rich master who employs her; the wealthy daughter, in her turn, seeks to rival persons of an elevated rank, and even of the highest condition. Nothing is too costly, nothing can stop her in her vanity. Some are not afraid to run into debt to satisfy their follies, and in order to keep up with the style, children do not hesitate to rob their parents, and the wife to misapply money that should serve for the support of the family.

Young persons, do not permit yourselves to be dragged along by the torrent of fashion; do not follow that spirit of vanity which becomes a source of so many dangers. Be simple in your dress and

in your tastes; let each one be content to live according to his means. Far from running after all the fashions and whims of the day, adopt only what your state of life requires and permits. Do not buy clothes at prices which you hardly can afford to pay. Permit nobody to look upon you as a worldly person; be well persuaded that by this regulated, wise, and Christian conduct, you will be more agreeable to God, and all the more esteemed by people; and if you are called to the holy state of matrimony, you will open for yourselves a surer and easier way to an honest and becoming alliance.

2d. *Boasting.*—Boasting consists in praising oneself without necessity, or seeking for praise. How many there are who are subject to this vice! One boasts of his birth, another of his fortune, one boasts of his qualities of mind, another of his qualities of body. Some publish their virtues and good works to the world, others glory in their faults, their sins and disorders. Some have good taste enough not to praise themselves; but what skill do they not employ that others may praise them, and with what pleasure do they not listen to compliments and eulogies? Such behavior is, to say the least, ridiculous, and draws down upon the person only mockery and contempt. It is not permitted to praise oneself except when edification requires it; and even then one must be careful to refer to God the merit of all the good works or of the qualities one speaks of.

3d. *Hypocrisy.*—Some do not wish to be virtuous, and, nevertheless, they desire to appear so. They do not wish to correct themselves of their evil habits, and still they desire to approach the sacraments. In church they have an air of piety and respect, they behave like angels, but elsewhere they throw themselves into vice and behave like demons. They do good actions, they pray, they give alms to the poor, when they are seen; but when they are not seen they will abandon the exercise of all virtue. What vice is more odious than hypocrisy? It was the crime of Judas who, at the Last Supper, mingled among the other apostles to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and who, soon afterwards, in the Garden of Olives, dared to betray his divine Master with a kiss. It is the vice of all those who hide their corrupted heart under the mask of devotion, who limit themselves to barren practices of piety and do not trouble themselves to fulfill their duties. Ah! my brethren, do not seek the regard of men, seek solely the favor of God. What good can the approbation and esteem of men do you if you incur the displeasure

of God who reads the bottom of your heart, and who will demand an account one day of your most secret actions?

4th. *Ambition.*— The proud man is never content with his lot or with the place he occupies. As soon as he is in one position, he desires to ascend to a higher one; when he is in an inferior condition, he aspires to leave his state, and to elevate himself to the highest ranks of society. He does not wish to be subject to anybody, and wishes to command all. He would like to see everybody below him and almost at his feet. He is angry, so to say, because he has superiors and masters, and would like to occupy their places. "Get away there, that I may get there," is the vulgar cry of the ambitious. Such is the end of all his intrigues and of all his actions. And to arrive at his end, what pains must he take! How many difficulties to surmount, how many humiliations to impose upon himself, how many rebuffs to sustain! Happy those who are born in a state in which they cannot aspire to the honors and dignities of the world! Ambition is an insatiable passion which undermines and consumes those who are attacked by it.

5th. *Stubbornness.*— The proud man is never in the wrong. And if he is alone in his opinion, he claims to be in the right and everybody else in the wrong. If he is contradicted, see his excitement, irritation, and anger! Hence arise quarrels, disputes, lawsuits, and implacable hatreds.

Finally, *Pride Is the Beginning of All Sin* (Eccl. x. 15). Backbiting, calumny, revenge, insubordination, disobedience, presumption, credulity, impiety, have often no other origin but pride. Pride has been the fatal source of the heresies which desolated the Church of Jesus Christ from the very beginning. Nothing is more common than pride; it infests the small ones of the world as well as the great, the poor as well as the rich, the ignorant as well as the learned. It is the vice of all men. We often see more pride under the coarse dress than under one of silk and gold. The simple day laborer has his pretensions, his vanity, his self-love, and even the beggar desires to elevate himself above others. Persons making profession of faith and piety are not always exempt from pride. Sometimes they glory in their practices of piety, in their good works, as the people of the world in their qualities and riches. Contradict or blame that woman whom you see so often in the church, at confession, at the holy table, and you will see how angry she becomes, how she flies into a passion and

gives way to a torrent of bitter and injurious words. *Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke* (Ps. CXLIII).

III. But as much as pride is a common vice, so much is it to be feared on account of the injury it does to God, and on account of the danger to which it exposes us.

There is no vice which displeases God more than pride, because there is none that attacks Him more directly. The proud man does not hide himself, he openly defies God, and whilst in the other vices we always find a pretext for excuse, such as ignorance, interest or weakness, the proud man acts for the sole pleasure of outraging God, seeking to equal Him, to rob Him of the glory that belongs to Him. "All other vices flee from God," says St. Thomas, "pride alone defies Him."

The Holy Ghost Himself declares that one of the things which God detests the most is pride (Ps. XX.); that the proud will sooner or later be filled with malediction (Eccl. x. 15), and that the proud man will never enter heaven. The severity with which God punished pride at all times will make us better understand the enormity of this sin. The rebellious angels, blinded by their own light, delighted for an instant in the excellence of their perfections, and wished to be equal to their Creator; and God created hell to be their abode forever. Adam and Eve, seduced by the spirit of darkness, aspired to be like God, and they are ignominiously driven out of paradise and condemned to a life of misery. The children of Noah undertake to build the Tower of Babel to perpetuate their name, and God confuses their language and disperses them all over the earth. Nabuchodonosor commands his subjects to render him divine honors, and he is driven from the society of men, reduced to the condition of the beasts, and obliged to eat the grass of the fields.

Pride is to be feared, also, on account of the dangers to which it exposes our salvation. Indeed, no virtue can exist with this vice. It corrupts them all and ruins them entirely. It is a poison which blackens all, which destroys all, which changes good into evil, meritorious works into sins, devotions into hypocrisy, angels into demons. What is there, for example, more agreeable to God than alms? But if in a sentiment of pride you give charity to the poor, your alms, far from being meritorious, become criminal. What is more excellent than prayer, fasting, the frequentation of the sacraments, and all the holy practices of Christian piety? And, nevertheless, if you permit them to be infected by the venom of pride, they are nothing but acts

of hypocrisy, which God cannot reward, because they are not done for Him.

This poison of pride, so dreadful in its effects, is so subtle that often it penetrates our soul without our perceiving it. How many persons there are who, in their practices of piety, in their good works, think they are acting only for God and for their salvation, and who, after all, act only through pride and self-love! It seems to them that they seek only the glory of God and the edification of their neighbor, and, nevertheless, they often seek only themselves, and are actuated only by human motives!

Is there, however, anything more unjust and more senseless than this pride? What have we that we have not received from God? as St. Paul says. But if we have received everything, can we glory in anything? (I. Cor. iv. 7.) Would a vessel of clay, covered with gold and silver, be more precious for that reason. You are proud of your noble origin, but is your origin due to yourself? Is it through your merits that you were born of illustrious parents? You are proud of your fortune; but does this fortune, supposing you have acquired it in a lawful manner, give you any true merit? In what do riches distinguish you from those who have them not, except by the good use you may make of them? You are proud of your strength, of your beauty; but, dust and ashes that you are, do you not remember that this body which you worship has come forth from the slime of the earth, and will soon return to dust, fall into corruption, and become a prey of worms? (Eccl. x. 9.) No, my brethren, we have nothing of which we can be proud. If we have talents, we owe them to God; if we have acquired science, it is only through the faculties He has given us; if we have piety and virtue, we owe them to His grace. The only thing, alas! that properly and entirely belongs to us, is sin. What reason, therefore, have we to be proud? What would you say of a poor beggar who would put on the garments of a rich man, and set out to show himself to everybody, to parade his borrowed luxury, and to draw upon himself the respect and homage of men? He would only be an object of ridicule and contempt. Is this not the conduct of the proud man? He tries to rob God of the glory that belongs to Him, he attributes to himself what he owes to the liberality of God; and instead of the esteem which he seeks, of the homage which he desires, he inspires only hatred and disgust, and reaps only disdain and contempt.

IV. Do you desire, my brethren, to preserve yourselves from such a dangerous and detestable vice, or to correct yourselves? These are the means: First, exercise yourselves in the practice of humility. Contraries are healed by contraries. Often represent to yourselves that you are nothing, that you have nothing that belongs to you, that you can do nothing by yourselves, and that all that you are, all that you have, you owe to God. The second means is to repel promptly all temptations of pride, vanity, and self-love, to be very faithful never to say anything in order to be praised, except when the good of your neighbor requires it, and always refer to God the merit of all your actions. The third means is to keep before your eyes the example of our Saviour and of His Blessed Mother. What a profound humility! What a forgetfulness of self! What an abasement, in the midst of the wonderful actions and in the practice of the most perfect and most heroic virtues! Finally, prayer is the most excellent means; for what could we do without that help of grace, and how can we hope to obtain grace without earnestly asking for it? Therefore, pray, pray often in order that God may show you how little you are, and enlighten you about your baseness and your nothingness, and grant you humility, that virtue so precious, so amiable, and so necessary, the foundation of all other virtues, as pride is the source of all vices. Amen.

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## IX. INSTRUCTION

### On Covetousness

Covetousness is an inordinate love for temporal goods. The goods of this world are gifts of God; and divine Providence grants them to us in order that we may use them according to our needs. Consequently to possess and to desire them as necessaries of life, is no crime. God reproves and condemns only the inordinate love for these goods which makes us seek them with too great a passion if we are deprived of them, or leads us to attach ourselves to them too much if we possess them already. It is this inordinate love, this excessive attachment to the goods of this world what we call *covetousness;* a blind and odious passion found in all conditions of life, among the

poor as well as among the rich, and which often leads to the most enormous crimes. The Holy Ghost says that *there is nothing more wicked than the covetous man* (Eccl. x. 9). It is easy to understand this, for there are in covetousness three characters of malice, each of which is sufficient to render it abominable in the eyes of faith and in the eyes of reason. The covetous man is impious towards God; he is hard and unjust towards his fellow-men; he is cruel towards himself. Let us develop these three thoughts.

I. The covetous man is *impious towards God.* To live in forgetfulness of God and in the neglect of all His religious duties, to prefer the goods of this world to God, who is the author of them, and to trample on the commandments of God in the mad rush for riches — such is the conduct of the covetous man.

The covetous man lives in forgetfulness of God and of his religious duties. Entirely given up to temporal interests, he neglects prayer and the sacraments, he does not assist at Mass or hears it without attention and devotion, he does not keep the Sunday holy. He travels on Sunday for business which could be done on some other day; he employs the Sunday in bargains and buying, and in settling affairs of commerce, in servile works, in gathering the harvest, etc. Money and the means to heap it up, are the only objects of all his thoughts, of all his preoccupations, and of all his solicitude. Money is his God and his idol. *Covetousness is the service of idols* (Col. III. 5).

Every day, from morning to evening, and even in the silence of the night, during his wakeful hours, his mind is entirely occupied with money, and he dreams of nothing else. Like those idolaters who prostrated themselves before idols of gold and silver, he adores a vile metal, and renders it a kind of sacrilegious worship.

And what excesses does he not commit in order to satisfy his covetousness? Judas betrayed his God for thirty pieces of silver. A frightful crime! but it is imitated every day by the covetous man. Perjury, calumny, atrocious detraction, adultery, odious immorality, nothing is too bad, provided he obtains his ends. *What will you give me and I will deliver Him unto you*, said the impious Judas (Matt. XXII. 15). How much will you give me says this man to the plaintiff, and I will serve you as false witness? How much will you give me, says another to an avenger, and I will assist you to destroy him? How much will you give me, says the woman who has lost all moral character, and I will deliver up to you my honor and my soul?

II. The covetous man is hard and unjust towards his fellowmen. The covetous man is never moved to pity the miseries of others. He has no feeling, no heart. If the poor come to his door, he never will have a piece of bread to give them. If there is in the congregation a needy family, which is in want of clothing, food, and fuel, he will never send the least help. The Gospel traces us the picture of the covetous man in the person of the wicked Dives. He had everything in abundance, he did not know what to do with his gold and silver; but he refused the crumbs that fell from his table to the unfortunate Lazarus who lay at his door covered with ulcers and dying with hunger. How many wicked men there are still in the world who count their wealth by thousands, and often by millions, but who are afraid they will be ruined if they give the smallest coin to the beggar who stretches forth his hand, forgetting what the proverb says, that *alms do not make poorer*, and what our Saviour teaches, that *He will regard as done to Him whatever we do to one of His brethren* (Matt. xxv. 40).

To hardness of heart the covetous joins injustice. What does he care about honor and uprightness? There is only question of procuring the goods which he covets, and he is not afraid to wrong his neighbor and to commit all kinds of injustice. Follow him in his affairs and into the details of his actions, and you shall see how fruitful he is in cunning and artifice, to get hold of something that does not belong to him. When he sells he will deceive you in both weight and measure; when he sells cattle he will not reveal their faults; when he loans money, it will be always with usury. What again must we say of so many people without delicacy and conscience, who take possession of things that do not belong to them? Is it not covetousness that pushes them to these thefts? O, execrable covetousness! Of how many injustices is it not the source; of how many quarrels, of how much cursing and swearing, of hatred and revenge is it not the cause! Yes, my brethren, it is covetousness, especially, that causes disunion and discord among neighbors, friends, and brothers. Let covetousness be torn out from the heart of man, and how many misfortunes and faults will disappear at the same time. *Covetousness is the root of all evils* (I. Tim. vi. 10).

III. The covetous man is cruel to himself. His riches serve only to render him unfortunate in this world and in the next.

The covetous man is unfortunate in this world, because he always desires what he has not, because he is afraid to lose what he has, and

because he does not know how to enjoy it. However great his fortune may be, he still wishes to increase it. All that he sees others possess causes him to envy them; his passion is a fever that torments him continually; it is a fire which nothing can extinguish; it is an abyss which nothing can fill. Never will he say, it is enough; on the contrary he always longs for new riches, he will always ask for more: *Bring, bring* (Prov. xxx. 15.) Did you ever see a covetous man satisfied with his lot, content with his fortune? What troubles and pains does he not take to heap up money! Though wealthy already, he labors without relaxation, like the poorest man. He travels day and night and in the most inclement weather; he braves the rain, the snow, the frost; he exposes both his life and health to preserve the goods already acquired, the money he has heaped up; and he is always filled with anxiety and alarm; he is always afraid of being robbed. He mistrusts everybody, even his nearest relatives and his best friends; he is continually in fear about his possessions; he always believes that everybody is wronging him, and that everybody is robbing him; and if he does suffer any damage, what vexation, what anger, what swearing, and cursing! In the midst of such care and restlessness, the covetous man cannot enjoy his riches. He possesses goods, and makes no use of them; he has money, and he does not employ it; he is wealthy, and he dresses like a poor man; he lives like a beggar, he lives on the coarsest food; he has children, and he leaves them in ignorance and want; if he has servants, he overtaxes them with work and nearly starves them; when he, or one of his family, falls sick, he wishes for neither medicine nor remedies. Covetousness has even gone so far as to beg from door to door. Oh, the sad and miserable condition of the covetous man! God punishes the covetous man by his very wealth; the very riches he has sought with so much avidity make him miserable. Add to this the shame and infamy which are unavoidably attached to his person; the contempt and indignation of which he is the object on the part of all good men. Is there any one in the world more despised and more unfortunate than the covetous man?

But if he is unfortunate in this world, he will be all the more so in the next. Listen to the terrible anathemas of the Holy Ghost upon the covetous: *Woe to you that are rich* (Luke vi. 24). *It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God* (Luke xviii. 25). Of what rich persons does the Gospel speak? Not of those who possess great riches, but of those

who are too much attached to them, of the covetous. And what our Saviour declares to us, St. Paul confirms by telling us in clear terms that *the covetous person hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Jesus Christ and of God* (Ephes. v. 5). The wicked rich man of the Gospel was not thrown into hell, says St. Gregory, for having usurped the goods of others, but because he was too much attached to his own goods, and because he made a bad use of them. Such is, coveteous man, the lot that awaits you if you do not repent. The day shall come when one will say to you: *Remember, thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime* (Luke xvi. 25.) Thou hast not made use of them as thou oughtest to have done; thou hast remained insensible to the miseries of thy fellowmen, *Depart from me into everlasting fire* (Matt. xxv. 41.)

IV. But the covetous man does not listen to this language, and far from applying to himself all that he hears of this vice, he always applies it to others. He alone cannot perceive the fault with which everybody reproaches him. "No covetous person even accuses himself of this in the sacred tribunal of penance," says St. Francis of Sales. To listen to the covetous, it is only a wise economy that make them gather riches. Undoubtedly, a prudent economy is no vice; on the contrary, it is virtue and a duty, if it is practiced within just limits. But to avoid one excess, must we fall into the opposite excess? Must one be covetous in order not to be prodigal?

From the picture I have drawn to you of covetousness, you may know whether or not you have been guilty of this vice; but, in order to make your examination more easy on this subject, fix your attention on a few principal points, and see: 1st. Whether your desire for money makes you neglect your duties, such as prayer, the sacraments, the sanctification of Sunday, the education and support of your family; 2d. Whether it leads you to have recourse to unjust means of increasing your wealth, such as theft, fraud, and usury; 3d. Whether you have given alms, as you should do, without complaint and murmuring, and according to your means; 4th. Whether you swear or become angry at the least loss or the least injustice done you; 5th. Finally, whether you are one of those monopolists who, after having locked up the resources of a country, sell, even to the poor whom you know to be suffering, for exorbitant prices. Ah! my brethren, how many covetous people are there in the world! How many, perhaps, among those that listen to me! For one must not think that it is necessary

to be wealthy in order to be covetous. No, the vice is common to all the ranks, and to all the conditions of life, says St. Jerome, and it often happens that the poor man is more attached to the little property he has, than the rich man to his treasures and domains. Even age, which contributes to heal, or at least to weaken, all the other passions, serves only to develop the passion of avarice. The older one grows the more one is attached to the goods one is going to leave soon; the nearer one comes to the grave the more one holds to the things of the earth. Covetousness is the favorite passion of aged persons.

V. If you wish to correct yourselves of this odious vice, begin by restoring the goods which you may have acquired unjustly, and with the firm resolution never more to do the least wrong to your neighbor; without this, all the rest would be useless. Then, accustom yourselves to give, and to give abundantly, to those who are in need, mindful of the reward which God has promised to those that give alms. Remember, a time and hour will come when you must leave all, and this time and hour is, perhaps, close at hand. Naked you came into this world, as the holy man Job says, and naked you must leave it. Finally, meditate often on the goods of eternity, the only solid and only durable riches, the only treasure which neither thieves, nor worms, nor rust, can take away from you. Employ all the means with courage and constancy to root out the vice of covetousness, and besides the public esteem and consideration which you will gain, you will obtain peace and tranquillity of soul which the detachment from the goods of this world will procure you, and you will merit the eternity of happiness which the Lord has promised to *the poor in spirit* (Matt. v. 3), and which I wish to you all. Amen.

## X. INSTRUCTION

### On Lust

Lust is an inordinate love of the pleasures of the flesh and of the senses.

All the pleasures of the senses are not forbidden. There are some innocent and pure ones which Providence itself has prepared for us,

and which are necessary to entertain us, to repair our strength, to preserve our health, to sustain our weakness, and to relieve our evils. Thus it is not forbidden to taste the sweetness of sleep, to love the savor of food; it is not forbidden to contemplate agreeable landscapes, beautiful aspects which nature presents to our eyes, to enjoy the cool and shade of the country; it is not forbidden to listen to harmonious sounds, to sweet concerts that please our ear. As long as these pleasures are not excessive, and as long as one enjoys them with a right view, they are permitted and legitimate.

But it is not the same with the pleasures of the flesh or the impure pleasures, that is, the glutting of that brutal passion designated under the name of *Lust*. It is not my purpose to speak to you, either of the different ways one can render himself guilty of the sin of lust, or of the diverse causes which can give rise to it, or of the remedies to employ to preserve oneself against it. I shall do this in explaining the sixth commandment of God. What I purpose to do in the present instruction is to give you an idea of the enormity of this vice. It would be my most hearty desire never to be obliged to speak of this vice. But, alas! it is so common, and it causes the loss of so many souls, that we, ministers of the Gospel, guardians of the house of God, would fail in our duties, we would be unfaithful to our ministry and our mission if we should keep silence, if we did not combat with the greatest zeal so fatal and dangerous an evil. However, I know the reserve which I must observe in my language, and hope to speak with all becoming restraint.

We need only to consider this vice in the eyes of faith and reason, and study its fatal consequences, to convince ourselves that there is no vice more degrading, more infamous, and more to be feared, than lust.

I. Let us consider it in the eyes of faith. A Christian is the image of God, as the Holy Scripture tells us, he is formed to God's own likeness. But what does he do when he has the misfortune to deliver himself up to the vice of impurity? He soils this image, he degrades it and drags it in the mire. A Christian is a brother of Jesus Christ; his flesh has become the flesh of Jesus Christ through baptism and holy communion; his blood has become the blood of Jesus Christ; his members have become the members of Jesus Christ. *Your bodies are the members of Christ* (I. Cor. VI. 15). Can one image a more intimate union? And can there be a more horrible abomination and sacrilege than to dishonor this body through the shameful vice of impurity,

to take the members of Jesus Christ in order *to make them the members of a harlot*? (I. Cor. vi. 16.) What would you say to a man who would push impiety so far as to make use of our temples, of our most venerated sanctuaries for the vilest practices, for the most shameful crimes? But you unchaste persons that listen to me, behold what you do yourselves, with the difference that here are only material and inanimate temples to be profaned, but your souls and your bodies are the living temples of the Holy Ghost, which you soil and which you deliver to the devil, His most cruel enemy.

The crime one commits in giving himself up to this vice is so great, that one of the most learned doctors of the Church, Tertullian, was not afraid to maintain that it is unpardonable, and that one could no longer admit those to penance who rendered themselves guilty thereof. Undoubtedly, this is an error, which the Church hastened to condemn; but she always ranked this crime as one of the most enormous, because she imposed upon those who rendered themselves guilty of it a rigorous fast on bread and water, for ten, twenty or thirty days.

What proves how much this vice outrages religion and displeases God, are the terrible punishments with which He has pursued lust. In fact was it not this vice that caused the Deluge? Was it not impurity that brought down fire and brimstone upon the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, and destroyed all their inhabitants? Was it not impurity that caused the death, through the sword of Phinees, of twenty-four thousand Israelites in one day, that effected the extermination of the almost entire tribe of Benjamin, and which drew so many evils upon the house of David? And in our own times, whence arise the many plagues and misfortunes that afflict us; pestilences and contagious diseases; so many sudden deaths, bloody wars, tempests and storms, inundations and draught; so many disasters which ravage cities, provinces, and kingdoms, and in which can be seen the hand of an irritated God who strikes and chastises us? Ah! my brethren, undoubtedly these plagues may be due to many causes and especially to blasphemy and to the profanation of the Lord's Day; but believe me, says St. Thomas of Villanova, they are also in punishment of intemperance and the frightful lusts of mankind. As in the time of Noah, all flesh has corrupted its ways, the disorder is universal to-day, and corruption is at its full height. This is why God, who sees all and whose justice is infinite, inflicts us with chastisements so rigorous

and so strange, and wishes to draw us out from the evil through the excess of our misfortunes and sufferings.

Sinners, given up to the disorders of the senses, will you begin to understand how criminal your passion is, and how unworthy of the name of Christian which you bear?

II. But it is not only faith that condemns this vice, it is also reason itself. His soul would be degraded and debased indeed, who would not feel all the hideousness and infamy the vice of lust contains. Behold those two old men of whom the Scriptures speak; they turn away their eyes in order not to see heaven; they do not dare to tell one another of the fire that consumes them. The shame attached to this brutal vice is so great, that it is called everywhere the "shameful vice." Everywhere the unchaste are despised, their presence is detested, and they are regarded as the desolation of the places which they inhabit. When a girl happens to forget her duties and her honor, her own parents are ashamed of her, her friends shun her, her neighbors curse her and keep away from her. And when, after a first fall, she sinks deeper into the crime and throws off all shame, what a debasement, what a degradation! She becomes the disgrace of her family, the disgrace of religion, and the scandal of society. Leave us, leave us, wives and girls without virtue and without honor; you are unworthy to appear in the assembly of the saints; go and hide your shame in those dark dens which you have chosen for your criminal projects! . . . Or, if you dare to show yourselves in the house of God, in the midst of the faithful, let it be to bewail your crimes and to implore pardon. And you also, unchaste men, if unfortunately there are some here present, of whatever age you may be, young or old, you who are not content to damn only yourselves, but labor also for the loss of others; you infamous seducers and corrupters, do not soil the holy place by your presence; you are doing the work of Satan; you are his agents and ministers! You take upon yourselves a terrible responsibility before God, and you incur the contempt of all good people. Ah! I conjure you, have pity on your own soul and the souls of your brethren; raise yourselves out of the mire into which you have plunged yourselves, and through repentance and prayer return to God and virtue.

III. Both faith and reason join in condemning the vice of impurity. Let us now consider the fatal consequences of this vice. In the first place, there is no vice which blinds man more than this. Hardly had

Solomon become unchaste when he offered incense to idols and became an apostate. And if there are to-day so many infidels in the world and so many impious men, what is the reason, if not because there are so many unchaste? You who have so little respect for religion and its ministers, who speak of them mockingly, since when do you speak so? Since you became unchaste. You who do not go to the sacraments any longer, who violate all the laws of the Church, who do not go to confession, who break every fast and abstinence, from what time do you date your neglect and indifference? Since you became unchaste. But it is not only faith which is lost by the vice of impurity, but health, fortune, and reason itself are all ruined. Impurity is like a devouring fire, a subtle poison, which ruins even the most robust temperaments. Those early wrinkles, which mark your forehead at the age of twenty-five or thirty years, and those incurable infirmities, that state of enervation, that loss of physical strength, whence does all this come? From the habit of impurity. Loss of health, loss also of fortune follow in its train. Hardly had the prodigal son delivered himself up to debauchery than he squandered and lost his inheritance. Alas! how many families once so flourishing, have for the same cause fallen into ruin! Hospitals and insane asylums are filled with miserable men and women whom impurity has brought to this most lamentable state. This fatal passion is the cause of all our misfortunes and pushes us into all disorders; and if one permits himself to be dominated by it he does not stop at any excess. As David, from an adulterer, became a homicide, so the impure sinner makes no scruples even of the most enormous crimes. O, passion, cursed passion! How many disasters dost thou cause every day in the world! How many souls dost thou precipitate into hell! Would you believe, my brethren, what the most respectable authors teach, and among others St. Liguori, that out of a hundred thousand souls, there are ninety thousand who are lost on account of impurity? Among ten damned, there are nine unchaste! This surprises you; but need we be astonished when we see the frightful debauchery of youth, of mature age, and even of childhood and old age? O, frightful plague of religion and society! O, despair of pastors and confessors! O, desolation of families!

I will insist no longer on this subject; I believe I have told you enough to make you feel the infamy of lust. I have only to exhort you to fly and to detest this vice. I know well the violent combats which you have to sustain against the devil, the world, and the flesh.

But, believe me, God does not prescribe anything impossible; to be chaste, with the help of God, you only need to earnestly wish it. Later on I shall tell you what means to employ. Meanwhile, it will be sufficient for me to recommend to you the virtue opposed to it, that is, chastity; which is the most beautiful of all virtues, the flower of good morals, as Tertullian says, the honor of the body, the glory of both sexes, and the foundation of sanctity; chastity, which elevates man above the angels, and renders him in some sort similar to God. *Incorruption bringeth near to God* (Wis. VI. 20). How agreeable must this lovely virtue be in the eyes of God, since He wished to be born of a virgin, since the disciple He loved the most tenderly was a virgin, since He honors a pure soul by the name of spouse, and since in heaven the virgins compose His court. Keep away from all the dangers that threaten purity. Pray often to God for this holy virtue, and rest assured that He will never refuse you the graces necessary to fulfill what He commands. Amen.

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## XI. INSTRUCTION

### On Envy

Envy makes us displeased at the good fortune of our neighbor, or glad at his misfortunes.

I. Envy is a very common vice. Everywhere we find those hateful spirits, who rejoice at the humiliation or misery of those whom they do not love; proud persons, who, unable to tolerate either superiors or equals, look with pain on the elevation and prosperity of others; covetous persons who look with an evil eye upon all those who, through their industry, their wise economy and hard labor, increase their fortunes day by day. Envy is the sin of the tradesman who is angry because customers patronize his rival; it is the sin of the merchant who sees with pain that the business of his neighbor is more flourishing than his own; of the farmer who is vexed because the harvest of another is more abundant than his own. It is the sin of those, moreover, who are jealous at seeing their neighbor better

dressed than they are, or because they are possessed of exterior qualities which they have not, or because their rivals find good husbands while they seem to be forgotten. It is the sin of the hired man, of the hired girl, who are jealous because other servants are better loved by their masters than they are. It is the sin of persons of a false and mistaken piety, who are jealous because another is more favored with graces than they are, or because they are allowed to receive communion more frequently. In a word, envy is the vice of all states of life, of all conditions and ages.

II. Envy is a very odious and condemnable vice.

We are all members of the same body and, consequently, bound to love one another. Charity is the first of the evangelical virtues, and the queen of all virtues. And is the envious man charitable? He who, on the contrary, is afflicted at the good of his neighbor, at the advantages he possesses, and who rejoices at the evils which God sends him? Envy is the very reverse of charity, as error is opposed to truth, darkness to light. How, therefore, can the envious man pretend to be the disciple of a God who died out of love for us? Considering envy only in the light of reason, what is there more odious and more senseless than to be afflicted at the happiness of one's brother, at his fortune, at his success, at his good qualities, and to rejoice at the evils that befall him? What interest can one have in all this? Will the envious man be richer or happier because his neighbor is poor and unhappy? Or is God not the Lord and Master of His own gifts and free to distribute them to whom He pleases and how He pleases? Thou wicked servant, because God is good is this a reason for you to be wicked? *Is thy eye evil, because I am good?* (Matt. xx. 15.) What reason have you to complain? Do you not owe all that you possess to God's goodness and liberality?

The envious man resembles the devil who seeks to destroy men only because of their happiness. Like that malignant spirit, the envious man wishes evil to others for the sole pleasure of seeing them miserable; and he suffers less from his own evils, says St. Chrysostom, than from the sight of the good that others enjoy. The malice of the envious surpasses in some sort that of the devil. Because, says the same father, the demon at least is not jealous of other demons, whilst the envious person is jealous of his fellow-men. In this, adds the same father, he is worse than the wild beasts, who at least respect the animals of their own kind.

III. Envy is a most prolific source of evil. It was through envy that the devil brought death into the world and all the evils that afflict us as the consequence of sin. The devil, jealous of the happiness of man who was to occupy in heaven the place he had lost through his pride, tempted him to revolt against God and thus occasioned his loss and the loss of all mankind. It was envy that caused the death of the innocent Abel. Cain was jealous at seeing that God preferred the sacrifice of Abel to his own, and taking him one day into the fields he killed him. It was envy that caused the trouble in the family of Jacob. The brothers of Joseph, angry on account of the marks of predilection which their father showed to this young child, took the frightful resolution of putting him to death, and they would have done so, undoubtedly, if Judas, one among them, had not begged them to content themselves with selling him to Ismaelitic merchants as a slave. It was envy that moved Saul to seek the life of David, the conqueror of God's enemies, and from whom he had received the greatest services, but whom he heard praised by all the people and raised to the highest honors. The cruel Herod heard that among the children born in Bethlehem there was one who was to be the king of the Jews, and in order to make sure his destruction, he ordered the massacre of all the children less than two years old. But the most enormous crime which envy ever caused, was the crime of the Jews against the adorable person of Jesus Christ. The doctors of the Law and the Pharisees irritated at seeing the Saviour working the greatest miracles, and, through the brilliancy of His works, the wisdom and holiness of His doctrine, gaining multitudes of people to follow Him, invented the most atrocious calumnies against Jesus, caused Him to be condemned to death, and consummated the frightful deicide upon Mount Calvary.

And how many evils does not envy cause every day, even before our eyes? Is not envy the cause of nearly all hatreds, vengeances, murders, and other enormous crimes? Is not envy the inventor of the most shameful reports, the most bitter criticisms, the most atrocious detractions, and the blackest calumnies?

Is it not envy that sets laborer against laborer, merchant against merchant, neighbor against neighbor, and brother against brother? Is it not envy that estranges the best of friends and hinders the reconciliation of enemies? "Worthy daughter of pride and covetousness,"

cries out St. Augustine, "thou dost not know what it is to be barren, and every day thou begettest new misfortunes."

IV. Envy causes misery to him who delivers himself up to it. The jealous person is punished already in this life by his own sin. His very passion is his torment. The spite, the vexation, which he feels at the good fortune of his neighbor, is for him a continual torture which permits him no moment of joy and pleasure. It is not thus with other vices; if they make us suffer through the remorse which they leave in the soul, they at least procure some satisfaction, some comfort. The thief profits by the goods which he steals from others; the lecherous, the intemperate, find enjoyment in satisfying their infamous passions; but with the envious man it is quite the contrary. The more he permits himself to be dominated by his favorite vice, the more unhappy he becomes. His misery, his sadness, become greater according as he nourishes his heart with gall and bitterness. Envy is a fever that consumes him, a worm that gnaws at his heart, a viper that lacerates his bowels, a poison that undermines and kills him. Look at the features of the envious man, and see how sadness and anger are depicted on them! Look at that melancholy countenance, that face wrinkled and emaciated, with its anxious and restless look! He is a living mirror of the troubles and anguishes that agitate his soul.

V. In spite of the torments, in spite of all the evils which envy causes, it is very hard to correct oneself of it when once the habit is contracted. According to the opinion of the Fathers, there is no illness more incurable, no healing more difficult. It is a desperate sin, says St. Gregory. According to St. Cyprian, it is an evil without remedy. Sad experience shows this only too clearly. When envy has once entered the heart it strikes deep roots, and ordinary grace is powerless to root it out. The soul of the envious man is so blinded that he seldom regards himself guilty of a vice of which he is reproached by everybody. You, my brethren, who have fortunately thus far never been attacked by this loathsome vice, redouble your attention and vigilance that its foul breath may never soil your soul! As to you who have the misfortune to be tainted with this vice, if God will be pleased to give you the grace to know yourselves well, here are some of the means which may assist you to correct yourselves. The first is a firm and resolute will. Vague resolutions and empty desires are useless. You must root out the evil with energy and courage, and God will

bless you and assist you in your efforts. The second means is to detach yourselves from the goods of this world and learn to long for the goods of eternity. Could envy subsist in a heart detached from this world? You will never be jealous because others possess goods which you have learned to despise. The third means is to speak well of the person who excites your jealousy, to praise his good qualities and virtues, to defend him against those that blame and censure him. The fourth means is to impose upon yourself a penance every time you have given way to the temptation of envy. The fifth means is to remember that the envious man is hated and despised by all; that he is unfortunate in this life through the pains and torments he causes to himself, and that he will be still more miserable in the next life. The sixth and most salutary means is to imbue your spirit with the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ, whose charity was endless, and remember that you cannot be His disciples if you do not love one another, and that charity cannot live where envy reigns.

These means, assisted by grace, will be sufficient to correct you of this passion. Though it is a very difficult vice to cure, nothing is impossible to the grace of God. Put all your confidence in God, and when you feel the temptation of envy arising in your heart, be prompt in repelling it; exercise yourselves in the practice of the virtue that is opposed to it; often examine your conscience on the duty of fraternal charity, and I do not doubt that you can root envy entirely out of your soul; or, if not, you will succeed at least in diminishing its effects; and this is the grace which I wish you with all my heart. Amen.

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## XII. INSTRUCTION

### On Gluttony

Gluttony is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. We say an *inordinate* love. One sins in eating and drinking only when one indulges in these to excess or for a bad purpose. There are, therefore, two kinds of gluttony: the one of food, the other of drink. The first is gluttony, properly speaking, the second is called drunkenness. We will speak of each in turn.

I. On Gluttony in Food.— You may sin: 1st. By eating too much; 2d. By eating from mere sensuality; 3d. By eating at all times and without necessity.

Gluttony is often only a venial sin, but there are three cases when it may become mortal. It is a mortal sin: 1st. If the excess in eating is of such a nature as to injure your health; 2d. If your passion for exquisite food is so great that you incur expenses much above your condition in order to procure it. Then we may say with St. Paul, that your belly is the god which you adore: *Whose god is their belly* (Phil. III. 19). 3d. If, in order to satisfy your appetite, you transgress, or intend to transgress, in a grievous matter, one of the commandments of God or of the Church, such as fast or abstinence.

Gluttony is a greater vice than we often imagine, and it is often attended with the most deplorable consequences. Nothing is better calculated to bring on sickness, to destroy health, and shorten life. The Holy Ghost says: *In many meats there will be sickness, . . . by surfeiting many have perished* (Eccl. XXXVII. 33–34). Nothing contributes more to darken and stupefy the mind, and to render it incapable of applying itself to serious labor; nothing is more calculated to heat the blood, to inflame the passions, and to lead us to the most shameful disorders.

To preserve yourselves against this vice, employ the following means: 1st. Take your meals with temperance and moderation, contenting yourselves with what is necessary, and carefully avoiding sensuality in the selection of your food. If the dishes that are served are good and agreeable to the taste, be thankful to the Lord; if they are only ordinary food, accept them without murmuring and complaint.

2d. Have a fixed hour for your meals, and do not spend too much time in eating. There are other duties to which you can better devote your time, and it is a disorder to live without a rule, to eat and drink at any hour, by a kind of mere instinct, rather than by reason.

3d. During meals, nourish your mind at the same time by good and salutary reading or conversation. We are Christians and let us always keep ourselves occupied with Christian sentiments. Let us not forget the words of our Lord that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that goes forth from the mouth of God."

4th. Never fail to say grace before and after meals. Our Lord Himself gave us the example of this at the time of the multiplication

of the loaves of bread, and later on at the Last Supper. In imitation of our divine Master, the first Christians blessed God at the beginning and at the end of their meals. Even the pagans were faithful in the observance of this pious practice and invoked the false gods before their meals. Is it not a deplorable thing to see so many Christians who have abandoned this pious and ancient custom, and who, like animals, partake of the gifts of heaven without raising their heads to thank God for the food He gives them?

5th. Finally, unite mortification with sobriety, as the saints always did "who," as St. Gregory says, "often abstained from things permitted in order to keep themselves more easily from those that are forbidden." It is to you especially, wealthy persons, that these words are addressed. Instead of listening only to your sensuality, and living in the refinements of luxury and of fine food, think of the poor who lack the necessities of life, who hunger and thirst, and who, as Lazarus in the Gospel, may even now be sitting at your door and would most willingly take the crumbs which fall from your table. Curtail all superfluous expensive food, and aid the poor. To give food to the poor is to offer it to God Himself, from whom you have received it, and you will, thereby, draw down upon yourselves His blessings and graces, and expiate the sins you have committed.

II. On Drunkenness.—Drunkenness, the second kind of gluttony, is excess in drinking. This is, unfortunately, one of the most common vices. Would it were given to me to depict to you this vice in colors frightful enough to inspire you with the horror it deserves!

Drunkenness is a very fatal vice and fruitful in many misfortunes. It impairs one's health, ruins one's fortune, causes the loss of reason and is the beginning of many crimes.

1st. *It Impairs Health.*—Intemperance, says the Holy Ghost, causes more people to die than wars. The blood becomes heated, strength is soon lost, and even the most vigorous temperament is gradually undermined, and soon entirely ruined. The drunkard does not live to a good old age; if he sometimes advances in years, it is a sad and miserable old age, bowed down with pain and infirmities. Drunkenness often causes sudden death, and, according to the testimony of physicians, it is astonishing that apoplexy is not more frequent among people addicted to drink.

2d. *It Ruins One's Fortune.*—We see proofs of this every day. How many families are reduced to want on account of this dreadful

passion! It is in the saloons that the drunken man blindly offers himself as bail, or rashly gives his signature, and binds himself to pay the debt of another. It is when a man is filled with liquor that designing persons can do almost anything with him; they buy from him at low figures, and sell to him at outrageous prices. He does not know what he says, or to what he binds himself. In a few moments, he loses the result of long and hard labor. How many workmen spend in one day all that they have gained in a week! How many have already drunk up their wages before the end of the year! How many children rob their parents and pillage their homes for the sole pleasure of delivering themselves up to drink! How many parents permit their children to live in filth and ignorance, to suffer from hunger, while they themselves pass days and nights in saloons! Drunkenness is one of the great plagues of society. Many a family is engulfed in this yawning abyss. If there are so many beggars at our doors, drunkenness is the cause. It is not so often work that is wanting, but temperance and economy. Young men, proud of their strength and ability, forget to lay up for the future; they squander their wages in drink, and when illness or some other reverse of fortune comes, there is no other resource but the poorhouse or beggary.

3d. *Drunkenness Darkens the Mind and Causes the Loss of Reason.*— The vapors which rise to the brain of the drunkard cloud his understanding. He knows neither what he says, nor what he does, whence he comes, nor whither he goes. His tongue can only stammer, his head is a weight that oppresses him, his legs refuse to carry him, he tumbles and staggers at every step. If nobody were there to assist him, he would roll in the mud like a vile animal, and he would pass the night exposed to all the inclemencies of the season. He is no longer a man, he is a beast; he is worse than a beast, for animals do not generally take more than they need.

Christian wives, you that have husbands of this character, how often have you not experienced the truth of what I say? How many times have you not been the innocent victims of the brutality and fury of the one who ought to be your friend and support? Oh! if I have any advice to give you, it is to say nothing, but to wait with Christian patience and resignation for more favorable moments. Your husband is not capable of listening to reason; to-morrow, perhaps, when the fumes of liquor have disappeared, when reason has returned, he will listen to your advice and charitable remonstrances.

4th. *Drunkenness Is a Source of Crime.*— It leads to injustice and theft. A husband appropriates to himself what ought to serve for the support of his family, his wife and children, and he spends it in drink; a woman, who unfortunately is addicted to this vice, all the more disgusting in persons of her sex, uses all manner of artifices to get hold of what belongs only to her husband; children steal from their parents, servants rob their masters to be able to gratify their thirst for drink. The voice of conscience is smothered, and all the sentiments of honor and honesty are driven out. Given up to idleness and laziness, the drunkard does not wish to work and, nevertheless, he desires to live luxuriously.

Drunkenness gives rise to anger and quarrels. The least word, the least contradiction, disturbs the drunkard and drives him into a fury. If you so often see and hear of disputes and conflicts among young men, and even sometimes among older persons, what is the cause? It is the excess of drink. When peace no longer reigns in the household, when the wife, crushed with insults and outrages, flies into a passion and turns against her husband, what is the cause? It is drink. When the young man no longer respects his father or mother, when he has only hard and rough words for them, when he even dares to revolt against them, what is the cause? It is drink. How many sufferings are the consequence of intemperance!

Drunkenness is followed by neglect and forgetfulness of all the duties towards God, and brings on a kind of impiety. The drunkard no longer practices the holy exercise of prayer; he no longer goes to the sacraments, or if he receives them, it is only to profane them. Instead of keeping the Sunday holy, he passes it in debauchery; he hardly ever appears in church, and if he does, he behaves without respect or modesty. The enemy of God's ministers, who censure his scandalous conduct, he pursues them with criticisms and calumnies. Nothing is sacred to him. He insults God Himself with curses and blasphemies.

*Drunkenness is the mother of impurity.* The apostle St. Paul says: *Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury* (Ephes. v. 18). St. Jerome affirms that a drunkard can never be chaste: "Never, never will I believe that a man addicted to liquor and a frequenter of saloons is a chaste man." How can he be chaste when he is abandoned by grace, influenced by liquor, and given up to all the heats of concupiscence, to all the fire of the passions?

This degrading vice is a disgrace to religion and to society. Need we be astonished at the anathema with which the Holy Ghost brands it? *Woe to you that rise up early in the morning to follow drunkenness* (Is. v. 11). Woe to you, for never shall you enter the kingdom of heaven: *Nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of God* (I. Cor. vi. 10). The Lord has sworn in His wrath, and you shall carry your iniquity to the grave. If you do not do sincere penance, He will never pardon you. *Surely the iniquity shall not be forgiven you till you die* (Is. xxii. 11).

Do you not dread the effect of these terrible threats, you who are the accomplices of drunkards, you who shelter them and furnish them with everything that can feed their brutal passion; you who give them to drink at every hour, and in whatever state they may find themselves, who permit your saloons to be open during divine service, and at any hour of the night, who receive indifferently all kinds of persons, of whatever age and sex they may be, you who tolerate in your place dancing and obscene songs, who do not respect either fast or abstinence? Ah! beware; you assume a fearful responsibility, and the day will come when you shall have to render a dreadful account to God.

Unfortunate slaves of drunkenness, have I not told you enough to inspire you with horror of such an ugly and fatal vice? Both your temporal and eternal welfare are at stake. Your fortune, your health, your reputation, the peace of your household, are at stake. There is question of an eternity of happiness or of misery. Fly the vice of intemperance, fly the places and persons who might be for you an occasion of excess, fly those companies of debauchery with whom you cannot associate without falling into your old and evil habits. Practice temperance and sobriety. Remember that you are disciples of a God-man to whom gall and vinegar was given to drink upon Calvary; of a God-man whose mortal life has been a continual suffering, and that it is only through the mortification of the senses and the crucifying of the flesh that you can have a share in the happiness which He has prepared for you and which He has promised to us all. Amen.

## XIII. INSTRUCTION

### On Anger

I. Anger is an inordinate excitement of temper, which causes us to fly into passion at what hurts and displeases us.

To be angry at what displeases us is not always sin. There is a holy anger excited in us through the horror we have at any offense to God, and which, far from being criminal, is often very praiseworthy, and even necessary for the honor and good of religion. Such was the anger of Moses when he broke the tables of the Law, on seeing the idolatry of the Israelites. Such was the anger of our divine Saviour, when He ignominiously drove from the temple those who profaned its sanctity. You do not sin by anger when, to hinder an evil, especially in the case of children, or of servants, you arm yourselves with a holy zeal to correct them. There are even circumstances where you would sin, if you did not vigorously chastise certain faults, as in the case of Heli, whose too great indulgence towards his children was followed by a terrible punishment. Still, when you are obliged to show indignation and anger, you must act with the greatest prudence. But unlawful anger, which is one of the seven capital sins, springs from an evil principle, such as selfishness, sensuality, or gluttony, and is not directed towards a good end, nor to God's glory. Such is the anger of those proud persons who cannot bear any contradiction, who fly into passion at the least remonstrance, and who become excited at the least sharp word. Such is the anger of those sensual and delicate people, who seek, at all times and everywhere, their own ease and convenience, and who become excited, break out into complaints and invectives, at everything that crosses them. Such is the anger of a father, of a mother, who permit themselves to be carried away to curses and violence, because a child, which has hardly attained the use of reason, has damaged some furniture, soiled or torn a dress, or committed some other fault very pardonable at its age. Such is the anger of a driver, for instance, who curses and beats a poor animal which is unable to draw a heavy load.

II. No one will deny that anger is a great evil. It makes man an enemy of himself, an enemy to his neighbor to whom the angry person becomes unbearable, and, finally, an enemy of God whose displeasure it draws down.

1st. The essential character which distinguishes man from the beast is reason. Now, there is nothing that troubles and darkens this divine light of men so much as anger. Look at the man who always allows himself to be carried away by this violent passion; he is beside himself, he listens to no remonstrance, he vents his fury on the innocent as well as on the guilty. He maltreats his wife, his children, his servants, under the least pretext; he trembles as if he were drunk, his face is at one time red and enflamed, at another pale and livid; his looks are frightful; his gestures, his movements are like the convulsions of a madman; his voice is only heard in curses and blasphemies.

Anger is a state of trouble, of agitation, which, instead of giving pleasure, serves only to render life bitter and painful. It inspires revenge and leads to quarrels and lawsuits, at once hurtful to peace and to fortune. It is not less prejudicial to health, it agitates the mind, it heats the blood, it exhausts strength, and it may even cause sudden death.

2d. Anger renders us intolerable to our fellow-men. Man is made to live in society, and society cannot be agreeable except peace and union reign throughout. What pleasure could one find in the company of him who flies into passion at the least pain or contradiction, who cannot suffer anything and pardons nothing? Life is bitter and peace is impossible with a man who, like a wild animal, seems always ready to bite and devour.

Anger is the most frequent cause of those quarrels and discords and implacable enmities which break out in the bosom of families and among persons who are united by ties of relationship or friendship. It inclines man to hatred and revenge, whence arise detractions and calumnies, injuries and outrages, disputes and lawsuits, conspiracies and murders.

3d. Anger draws down upon us the displeasure and enmity of God. The spirit of God is a spirit of peace, which makes its dwelling in homes of peace and not in those of trouble. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, came into this world to bring peace: *He shall not cry*, says the prophet Isaias, *and his voice shall not be heard abroad; the bruised reed he shall not break, and smoking flax he shall not quench* (Is. XLII. 3). Jesus taught us by His example as well as by His words, to be meek and humble of heart, and He assures us that the happiness of heaven is for the peaceful. Does this spirit of peace and charity reign in the heart of the angry man, in souls of persons subject to fits

of fury, who, like volcanoes, are always in danger of erupting? Surely it is not the spirit of God that reigns in such souls; it is the spirit of darkness, it is the devil himself, as the apostle St. Paul teaches us: *Give not place to the devil* (Ephes. iv. 27). Oh, consider the dreadful judgment which Jesus Christ pronounces against angry persons! Whosoever is angry with his brother merits to be condemned by the tribunal of judgment; and whosoever in his anger treats his brother as a fool merits the torment of hell fire: *Shall be in danger of hell fire* (Matt. v. 22). As in all other vices, there are in anger various degrees of malice. Anger is not always a mortal sin; but it is always very dangerous and leads into grievous faults. And still there are many who do not make it a matter of confession, or who accuse themselves of it without any contrition, and without purpose of amendment.

III. Let us consider the means of correcting anger.

The first means is a firm resolution to avoid anger. It is not with diseases of the soul as with diseases of the body. Some corporal diseases are incurable; but there is no disease of the soul that cannot be cured with the help of God's grace. Whatever may be the vivacity of your temper, however deeply rooted the habit of anger may be, it depends only on you to apply the remedy. Why should reason and religion not do in your soul (if you will permit the comparison) what training does to animals? By skill and patience and long training, bears, lions, tigers are tamed and made tractable. Do you believe that, with a sincere and firm will, you cannot also mitigate and soften the violence of your character? You are quick and fiery, you say, but how many saints have been more fiery than you, such as Francis of Sales; but who, nevertheless, became models of meekness? They were saints, you may say. Yes, but it was in combating their passions that they became saints.

A second means of overcoming anger is to consider that we are all condemned to suffer; that whether through malice, ignorance or weakness, the persons with whom you have to live will always be for you a cause of contradiction; that your affairs, labors, and projects will rarely succeed exactly according to your desires, and that, willing or unwilling, you must either carry your cross or drag it. If you are resigned to the will of God and accept all trials with patience, God will assist you to bear your cross, and you will acquire great treasures of merits for heaven; but if you complain in your sufferings and fly into a passion at every contradiction, your cross only becomes heavier,

and you fall into an abyss of sins. Be ready to meet trials and contradictions every day in your life. A foreseen blow does less harm.

A third means of overcoming anger is to exercise yourselves in the practice of meekness and patience. Repress the first movements of anger, raise your mind to God and ask Him for patience. Keep silence when you are tempted to anger and do not say a word as long as you feel your heart agitated. Whatever you would say would only exasperate you the more. Even if you have good reasons for your anger, it is better to keep silence, as long as you perceive that the person with whom you have to do is not disposed to listen. It is with anger as with fire. The more material you put thereon, the more fiercely it burns. The life of St. Francis of Sales furnishes us a remarkable example of this. A young man who was beside himself with anger against the holy bishop, came to see him and began to upbraid him with all that hatred and rage could suggest to him. Threats, injuries, curses,— nothing was forgotten. But St. Francis said not a word. The furious young man, exasperated at meeting no resistance, withdrew, and soon recognizing his wrong, he returned to his room, threw himself at the feet of the saint and begged his pardon. Employ the same means, my brethren, especially if you have to live with fiery and difficult characters. You wives, for example, that have husbands of a high temper, say nothing while they are angry and you will calm them much quicker. It was thus that St. Monica used to act toward her husband, who had an extremely violent temper. Whatever bad treatment she received, she never complained, she contented herself with praying for him and she ended by gaining him to Jesus Christ. Though he had been a pagan he was converted and became a good Christian.

A last means of overcoming anger, is to look up to Jesus, your divine model, and imitate His example. Oh, the meekness and patience of Jesus! He was overwhelmed with injuries and He answered nothing; He was outraged and tormented, but He opened not His mouth to complain. Like Jesus, be meek, patient, and resigned. Suffer for the love of Him, as He has suffered for the love of you; suffer in expiation for your sins, and to merit the reward which the Saviour has promised to the peaceful and to the meek of heart, when He said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them. Amen.

# XIV. INSTRUCTION

## On Sloth

Sloth is a disgust for the things of God or for the duties of our state of life, which causes us to omit them or to fulfill them in a careless manner.

There are two kinds of sloth: the one corporal, the other spiritual. Corporal sloth is that which inclines us to laziness, to avoid labor, to love rest and trifling amusements. Spiritual sloth makes us neglect prayer, the sacraments, the service of God or the care of our salvation. We shall speak of both in succession.

I. Corporal Sloth.—This kind of sloth is generally called laziness or idleness. It is a greater evil than is often believed. It is an infraction of the general law of labor; it injures society and opens the way to great dangers.

1st. God has imposed upon all men the obligation of leading a laborious and useful life. *Man is born to labor*, says the Holy Ghost, *as the bird is to fly* (Job v. 7). From the very beginning man was condemned to labor in punishment of original sin, when God declared that *he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face* (Gen. iii. 17). He is also obliged to labor on account of the sins he commits every day. The law of labor is a general law, binding upon all men, the rich as well as the poor; and everything in nature gives us an example. The sun rises every day to give light to the world; the earth yearly produces fruits to nourish us; the animals are constantly in movement to suppy their wants and ours; the angels in heaven are uninterruptedly occupied in the sublime mystery entrusted to them. Should man alone be exempted from this great law of labor? *Go to the ant, O sluggard*, says the wise man, *and she will teach you to labor* (Prov. vi. 6).

2d. But not only God commands us to work, society also demands it of us; for being destined to live in society, we must assist one another, each according to his condition. There are in society different states or conditions of life, such as agriculture, the profession of arms, commerce, trade, and above all the sacred ministry. Good order and even the very existence of society, require this variety, for if everybody were to till the land, how could we live? If there were no soldiers, who would defend our frontiers and who would protect us against

invasion? If there were no merchants, how could we procure the necessities of life? And if there were no trades, how could we lodge and dress ourselves? And if there were no priests to instruct us in religion, who would reconcile us to God in confession, and who would open the gates of heaven for us? Each one must, therefore, labor in the state in which he finds himself, otherwise he would be a useless member of society. He would be like the drone which devours the honey of the working bee; like a weed which draws up the sap necessary for the useful plants; he would not labor for anybody, whilst everybody else would labor for him!

3d. Another reason which prompts us to work, are the dangers to which idleness exposes us. Oh, the tediousness, inconstancy, and uneasiness into which idleness throws us! No man is more burdensome to himself than he who has nothing to do. The Holy Ghost says: *Idleness hath taught much evil* (Eccl. xxxiii. 29). Idleness is the source of many vices. This is a sad truth which the experience of every day confirms. What led the holy king David into adultery and homicide? Idleness. And what is it that casts so many souls into hell? Idleness. Impure thoughts assail the idle man. Just as the stagnant water brings forth all kinds of reptiles, so also an idle soul begets all kinds of vices. When does the devil attack you the most, my dear brethren? When does he trouble your imagination and push you on towards evil? Is it not when you are idle? Intemperate and lecherous men, when is it that you give yourselves up the most to your guilty excesses? Is it not on days of rest, on days when you are idle? Worldly women when do you sin most against charity, when do you render yourselves most guilty of calumny and criticisms? Is it when you stay at home with your family, occupied with your children and with the various cares of your household; or is it when you abandon your work, and frequent the society of persons idle like yourselves?

If you wish to preserve yourselves in virtue and work seriously for your salvation, it is important to acquire habits of diligence. Labor is an excellent remedy against the diseases of the soul and the attacks of the devil: "Let the devil find thee always busy," said a Father of the Church. Labor is necessary to rich and poor, to young and old, but especially to the young. If you are rich, work for the poor; if your health is delicate, or if your condition in life exempts you from hard labor, keep yourselves occupied in works of the mind or of the body, becoming to your state.

But it is not enough to labor, it is also necessary to labor with supernatural motives in order to be pleasing to God and to lay up merits for heaven. Labor for the glory of God and the expiation of your sins, in order that your work may be agreeable to God and useful to your soul; offer the work of the day to God every morning on rising, and renew the offering during the day. If fatigue, or heat, or bad weather make your work harder, think of the labors and fatigues of Jesus Christ our Master and our model; think of the sins you have committed and which you can expiate by labor. You will thus avoid sins which are so often committed in working, such as swearing, cursing, obscene songs or lewd conversation, and you will draw down the blessings of heaven upon all your undertakings and all your labors.

II. On Spiritual Sloth.—Spiritual sloth is also called lukewarmness and indifference.

1st. The state of lukewarmness is unfortunately only too common. How many indolent Christians there are who, occupied only with the things of this life, forget the things of eternity! How many Christians without devotion and without piety who omit their prayers almost altogether, or who say them without attention and without fervor; who assist at Mass only on days of precept, and even then with languor and disgust, longing for the moment when they can leave; who never assist at Vespers and other services of the parish, and thus pass the entire Sunday without thinking of God or their soul! How many cowardly souls who hardly ever appear at the holy table, or who approach it only with indifference and lukewarmness! Indifference is the curse of our century; the plague of religion. Was there ever a greater forgetfulness of the things of God? Were the sacraments ever less frequented and the churches more deserted? Undoubtedly, we find still many faithful to the teachings of their childhood and who practice their religion, but also how many are there who have abandoned all Christian practice; they often remain in a deadly sloth, and hardly ever think of prayer and of going to church or to the sacraments. I do not speak of this congregation in particular, but I speak in general and, except one has lost all love for God and zeal for His glory, one cannot look at such a deplorable state of things without being touched to the heart.

2d. Do you appreciate the danger of lukewarmness? Ah! says the Lord, through the mouth of St. John, the Evangelist: *I would*

*that thou wert cold or hot* (Apoc. III. 15). For if thou wert cold, I would take thee into my bosom to warm thee, and if thou wert hot, I would preserve thee in this state, *but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* The state of spiritual indifference is worse, indeed, in certain respects, than the state of sin. A sinner fallen into mortal sin easily recognizes it, and appreciates his miserable situation; he feels the sting of remorse, and is disposed to do penance. But the indifferent soul does not think of changing his life. Not committing great crimes, it seems to him that his state is not very guilty before God; he believes himself above reproach and is perfectly satisfied with himself. Remonstrances have no effect on him. You may announce to him the most frightful truths; you may represent to him all the rigor of God's judgments, you may remind him that he must fulfill the *whole* law in order to be saved — he is accustomed to this language; he is buried in his apathy and remains insensible to all.

If the indifferent Christian would stop at lukewarmness he might avoid grievous faults. But, living without love of God, and without any zeal for his salvation, he is constantly in danger of falling insensibly into the greatest disorders. What will keep him back from the brink of the precipice? What will protect him and save him in so many difficult circumstances? What will uphold a careless soul who fulfills no religious duty well, who hears Mass carelessly, who profanes the sacraments by insufficient preparation, or who neglects them altogether? The ruin of a lukewarm soul is almost certain.

3d. What are the means to preserve us from so fatal a state?

First, examine yourselves well, and see whether you find yourselves in this unfortunate situation. Implore the light of heaven, and often say with St. Augustine: "O Lord, make that I may know Thee and know myself!" How many there are who are plunged in the most deplorable lukewarmness, who live in a complete lethargy for many years, and who do not believe that their salvation is in danger!

The second means is to take a firm resolution to abandon as soon as possible the state of indifference, and, consequently, to combat energetically all obstacles which present themselves. The most common fault of lukewarm persons is that they have only a weak desire to convert themselves, and they are afraid of the least difficulty. Instead of attacking the evil at its root, they merely trifle with it. It is difficult to rise out of a state of lukewarmness and sacrifices must be made.

The third and last means is by practicing the very things the neglect of which has brought you into this sad state. How did you fall into lukewarmness? By neglecting prayer and the sacraments. By falling into the habit of venial sin, and losing the fear of God, and by abandoning all the practices of Christian piety. Commence by taking up again the practices which you have abandoned — prayer, pious reading, examination of conscience, confession, and communion. You were careless in the duties of your state of life — excite yourselves to fervor in the performance of these duties; you have contracted bad habits — correct them as soon as possible.

With God's grace you will then succeed in leaving this fatal state of lukewarmness, and you will return into the way of piety and the faithful and fervent fulfillment of the Lord's law, and merit that immortal crown of glory. Amen.

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## XV. INSTRUCTION

### The Decalogue — On the Decalogue in General

The word *Decalogue* is derived from the Greek and signifies ten words or discourses. These are the ten commandments which God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, about two thousand years after the creation of the world. The circumstances of this memorable event deserve to be recalled.

I. It was already three months since the people of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt, when they came to the foot of Mount Sinai. God, from the top of this mountain, called Moses, His servant, and charged him to tell the people that if they desired to be faithful to His ordinances, He would make a covenant with them, and would select them as His beloved people and as His favorite nation. The people of Israel having answered unanimously that they would do all that the Lord was pleased to ordain, God again told them through Moses that they should keep themselves ready for the third day, that they should purify themselves and fast, because

the Lord Himself was going to speak to them from the top of the mountain.

The third day having come, behold Mount Sinai was covered with a thick cloud; flashes of lightning rent the sky, the thunder roared, and a great noise of trumpets resounded in the air. Then the Lord, in the midst of a whirlwind of fire, spoke thus to the astonished people: —

*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

1. *Thou shalt not have strange gods before me.*
2. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*
3. *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.*
4. *Honor thy father and thy mother.*
5. *Thou shalt not kill.*
6. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
7. *Thou shalt not steal.*
8. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*
9. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.*
10. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods* (Ex. xx. 2–17).

But God did not content Himself with the announcing of the Ten Commandments before the assembled people. He also engraved them upon two tables of stones. He commanded Moses to ascend to the top of the mountain, which was still hidden by a thick cloud, and there during forty days, God explained to him the Commandments.

II. Why this solemn promulgation of the law upon Mount Sinai? Had this law not been given to man since the beginning of the world? Was it, therefore, necessary to give it again?

It is true that God in creating man imprinted in his soul the knowledge of all his duties to his Creator, to his neighbor, and to himself. We call this the *Natural Law.*

If man had preserved intact the deposit of all these moral truths, such as they had been intrusted to him from the beginning, undoubtedly the promulgation of Sinai would not have been necessary.

But mankind had fallen into errors and disorders, on account of the sin of our first parents. *All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth*, says Holy Scripture (Gen. vi. 12), in speaking of the men who lived during Noah's time. It needed nothing less than a universal deluge to purify the earth from the abomination with which it was covered.

In spite of this terrible chastisement, after men had multiplied anew they soon forgot their duties, as well as the truths which had been revealed to them; and to such an extent that a few years after the deluge, idolatry, with all the vices that accompany it, had become almost general. This is why God in His supreme wisdom wished to remind man of the law which He had given to him from the beginning, and this time with all precision and with all solemnity.

But why was the law engraved upon stone? To teach us that it should be engraved in indelible characters, in both our mind and heart; that it is, according to the expression of the prophet, a *light* that ought to lighten all our steps, and a *rule* to which we ought to conform all our actions; that this law is unchangeable and eternal as its author, because it is justice itself; because the laws of men may change, but the law of God is inviolable and absolutely independent of customs and climate, obliging all men, Catholics or non-Catholics, Christians, pagans or infidels.

And why was the law engraved on two tables of stone, instead of writing it entirely upon one? Because this divine law has two principal objects: our duties towards God, and our duties towards our neighbor or towards ourselves. The first three commandments engraved upon the first table regard only God alone, and the last seven, engraved upon the second table, relate to ourselves and to our neighbor. We must not confound the two tables; for although charity is the basis and foundation of the whole law, there is, nevertheless, a great difference between the charity we owe to God, the Author and Creator of all things, and the charity we owe to man, a creature of God.

III. This holy and adorable law sums up in a few words all the duties which we have to practice, just as the Creed contains all we must believe, and the Lord's Prayer all we have to ask for. O wonderful law in which forty centuries have not found a fault and could not change one jot! O perfect law, to which the greatest philosophers and the wisest legislators have rendered homage!

Our duties toward this divine law can be reduced to three: To *study* it, to *meditate* on it, and to *practice* it.

1st. We must study the divine law. We cannot observe the law without knowing it. In the first place it is necessary to learn the *letter* of the law; hence the pious practice of reciting the commandments at the morning or evening prayer, in order never to forget them. You must, moreover, understand the spirit of the law; for of

what good is it to know the *letter* of the law without the meaning? Of what good to know the words: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," if you do not know what swearing and blasphemy is, or do not recognize their malice? How many there are who do not know even these first elements of Christian morality! How many Christians who cannot appreciate either the merit or the malice of their actions, who see sins where there are no sins, and who do not see any sin where there is sin!

It is, however, very easy to learn the law of God. Assist regularly at the instructions which are given in the parish church and listen to them with attention, and you will learn all that you ought to know. The catechism is the simple and familiar explanation of the divine law, and it is certainly the most useful instruction for all, children and parents, servants and masters. I might say, for the learned as well as for the ignorant, because there is always something new to learn in the study of religion. Simple explanations of Christian doctrine often have a greater effect than the most eloquent sermons.

2d. But it is not sufficient to know the letter and the meaning of the law of God; we must also make it the subject of our meditations. Moses said to his people: *These words and ordinances of the Lord shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand and they shall be and move between thy eyes; and thou shalt write them in the entry and on the doorposts of thy house* (Deut. VI. 6–9). The royal prophet tells us that he meditated day and night upon the law of God, and that the sweetness which he found in it surpassed the sweetness of honey: *Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb* (Ps. XVIII. 11); that its value was in his eyes incomparably above gold and silver: *The law of thy mouth is good to me, above thousands of gold and silver* (Ps. XCVIII. 72).

Meditate upon this holy law in all that it ordains or forbids to you. Meditate upon the homage and adoration, love and thankfulness which you owe to a God who has drawn you out of nothing, created you according to His own image and redeemed you at the price of His blood. Meditate upon the ties of nature and religion which unite you to your fellow-men whom you ought to regard as your brothers, and upon the important duties of charity and justice which you have to

fulfill towards them. Meditate upon the theological and moral virtues which this law imposes upon you, such as faith, hope, and charity, humility, chastity, temperance, etc.

3d. Though it is important to meditate often upon the law of the Lord, and to understand it well, it is still more necessary *to practice it faithfully.*

Who is it that imposes this law upon us? It is the Lord, your God and your sovereign Master, who created you and all things, who with one word drew the world out of nothing, and who could destroy it in the same manner; He before whom all the nations are as dust and ashes: *I am the Lord thy God* (Ex. v. 6). Has God not, therefore, the right to give us commandments? What blindness and folly on our part, if we should refuse to be subject to them!

God is not only our Creator and Master, He is also our Benefactor; He has delivered us, as He delivered the Jewish people from the bondage of Egypt: *I have brought thee out of the land of Egypt* (Ex. xx. 2), that is, He has delivered us from the slavery of the devil and sin, by shedding His blood; He has reopened for us the gates of heaven, the true Promised Land.

Moreover our own interest should urge us to observe the law of God; that is, our happiness in this world and in the next. What forms happiness in this world? Surely not riches and pleasures which only beget uneasiness and remorses; it is the peace of the soul, the calm and tranquillity of a good conscience. But this peace of soul, this tranquillity of conscience can be enjoyed only through the observance of the law of God and the practice of Christian virtue: *Much peace have they that love Thy law* (Ps. cxviii. 165). Does not our daily experience prove this? Are we ever happier and more content than when we are at peace with God?

Peace and happiness in this world, and eternal happiness in the next, will be the reward of our submission to the law of God. This was the answer which our Saviour gave to the young man who asked Him what he should do to be saved. *If thou wishest to be saved, keep the commandments* (Matt. xix. 16). Engrave deeply in your mind these words of your divine Master. Do you wish to gain heaven, to possess that infinite and eternal felicity which God has promised to His elect, and which the angels and saints enjoy? Then observe the commandments, practice the law of the Lord. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

Can you hesitate for a moment, especially when you consider that by losing heaven you will merit hell? There is no middle place between an eternal happiness and an eternal misery; and if you lose heaven, hell will surely be your lot forever.

IV. We must observe the law of God *entirely*, at *all times*, with *fervor* and with *perseverance.*

1st. We must observe it *entirely*, and not only in part; for, says the apostle St. James: *Whosoever offends in one point is become guilty of all* (James II. 11).

2d. We must observe it *at all times.* We must defy all raillery and criticism, brave all obstacles, surmount all difficulties; for the will of God and the salvation of our soul must prevail over all other considerations, and must animate us to be ready to endure the greatest sacrifices, if necessary, rather than to break the law of God.

3d. We must observe it *with fervor*, that is, perform with joy and love all it commands us, avoid carefully what it forbids, regard it as our most precious treasure, and as the source of all true happiness.

4th. We must observe it *with perseverance*, that is, until the end, in old age as in the fullness of manhood, in youth as in infancy; for only those who persevere to the end can be crowned in heaven.

Have you thus far practiced this holy and adorable law? Ah! how many lukewarm and indifferent souls there are, who have no love for God and who render no worship to Him! How many who swear and blaspheme His holy name! How many profaners of the Sunday! How many parents and masters who neglect the care of their children and servants! How many retainers of ill-gotten goods!

My God, we acknowledge with bitter sorrow that until now we have not observed Thy precepts; but we implore Thy mercy to pardon us our offenses, and in future we will try to be more submissive and more faithful to Thee. Amen.

## XVI. INSTRUCTION

### On the First Commandment

*I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have any strange gods before me*

I. The first commandment, which is the greatest of all, commands us to adore God, to serve Him alone, and to love Him with our whole heart.

To adore God is to render Him supreme worship, to honor and acknowledge Him as our sovereign Lord and master. Adoration is, therefore, due to Him alone, because He alone is the sovereign creator and master of all things.

There are two kinds of adoration: interior adoration and exterior adoration. We adore God interiorly by paying Him our homage from the bottom of our heart, without pronouncing any word, without making any exterior sign to manifest our worship. We adore Him exteriorly, when we join to the homage of the heart words or an attitude of body which expresses exteriorly the respect and love which we feel interiorly. Vocal prayer, genuflections, raising the hands towards heaven, the sign of the cross, and all the ceremonies of the Church, are examples of this exterior worship.

We render to God a worship of adoration, both interior and exterior, by acts of faith, hope, and charity. By faith we subject our minds to the truths of revelation; by hope we put all our trust in the infallibility of His promises; and by charity we devote to Him our whole heart to love Him alone. Hence, the expression of St. Augustine: *Deus fide spe et caritate colendus;* meaning that all the acts of religion, both interior and exterior, refer to one of these three virtues: faith, hope, or charity.

II. We have already spoken of the necessity of each of these three theological virtues; and, consequently, of the necessity of the interior worship which we owe to God; but the important question arises, whether exterior worship is equally necessary, and whether it is not sufficient for man to honor God in his heart. The answer is easy. If our soul is obliged to adore God, why should not also our body be obliged to adore Him in its manner? If our body is to partake in the pains or rewards of the soul in the next world, why should it not also partake in the duties of humble dependence and of sacrifice that

are imposed upon the soul? The sun, the moon, the stars, and all inanimate creatures render homage to the sovereign grandeur of God, by fulfilling the purpose for which they were created; why should man's body alone in the world be dispensed from such a duty? Living in society, as we do, we have to edify and stimulate one another; but how could this be done without an exterior worship, without prayer and public ceremonies? Moreover, exterior worship is a direct and inevitable consequence of interior worship. All the sentiments that agitate our soul, love or hatred, joy or pain, hope or fear, despair or confidence, instinctively show themselves outwardly, and often picture themselves even unwillingly on our features, in our movements, in our gestures, and in our whole exterior. How, then, could the faith, the hope, the charity, the gratitude, the repentance, with which our heart is filled, remain pent up within us, without any exterior manifestation whatever? No, it is impossible that the sentiments which we feel towards God should not show themselves by exterior acts. And to go further, I say that interior worship cannot even exist without showing itself exteriorly; it must have a form, a body that animates and preserves it. And hence the custom, as old as the world, of offering sacrifices to God; hence those feasts, those divine services, and other pious exercises constantly practiced in the Church. Abolish all the exterior worship, public prayer, mass and the sacraments; close the churches, overthrow the altars, and soon you shall no longer have any idea of God, or of religion, or of the duties which religion imposes upon us. God would be forgotten or disowned. Atheism would reign supreme, and religion and morals would be no more.

It is not sufficient, therefore, to adore God in spirit; we must also adore Him exteriorly; the body must unite with the soul in paying to God the homage due to Him.

Such is the duty which the First Commandment imposes upon us. Interior adoration consists in acts of faith, hope, and charity; and exterior adoration in the exterior acts of religion.

The sins against the First Commandment are, therefore, all sins against faith, hope, and charity, and against the virtue of religion.

III. Let us examine the sins against each of these virtues.

Sins against Faith.— A person sins against faith: 1st. If he neglects to instruct himself in the principal truths of faith and the duties of his state. Such are those who neglect to attend the religious instructions of the parish, when they have no other means to

learn their religion, or who assist at these instructions without attention and without a desire to profit by them. There are cases in which such a negligence would be a mortal sin.

2d. If he neglects to instruct those under his charge in the truths of religion and duties of their state of life. Parents and masters commit a moral sin if they grievously neglect to instruct their children or their servants: *If any man has not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied his faith, and is worse than an infidel* (I. Tim. v. 8).

3d. If he refuses to believe one or several truths of faith, as the pagans, the Jews, the Mohammedans, who reject them all, or the heretics who deny one or more truths, or bad Catholics who, without formally denying any of the truths of religion, are not really convinced of the truth of their faith.

4th. If, without making a public profession of heresy, he speaks against faith, as those who say that Protestants can save themselves in their religion, just as well as we can save ourselves in ours; that confession is not necessary; that the priests speak of hell or of purgatory only to frighten us. Such impious and blasphemous talk, if seriously meant, is a grievous sin. Even when indulged in through levity, it must be always reprehensible on account of the scandal given.

5th. If he composes, publishes, sells, reads, or borrows books against faith and religion, or if he subscribes to papers which are hostile to religion. The impious newspapers are often more to be dreaded than books avowedly anti-Catholic, because they instill the poison into their readers under the most various forms, and being distributed every day by thousands, they reach everywhere, and thus infect entire society. Beware of bad books and of the hidden venom of bad papers, all the more dangerous as they do their evil work under the pretext of giving the news; if any fall into your hands destroy them immediately, and when, unfortunately, you have any in your possession, do not hesitate to destroy them right away.

6th. If he doubts the revealed truths of religion; as, for example, if he should say to himself: Who knows whether there is a hell? Who has been there? Who knows whether there is a God? Who knows whether our Lord is really present in the holy communion? . . . If these doubts are real and voluntary, they are mortal sins.

7th. If being convinced of all the truths, he should desire that faith might accommodate itself more to his ideas, to his interests, or

his inclinations; for instance, that God should not mind if he commits sin; that there ought to be no hell to punish his crimes; that revenge, impurity, theft, ought to be permitted; . . . in one word, if he makes of religion an intolerable yoke, and believes and obeys only by force, and would like to be exempt from all check. Such a man is well-nigh lost.

8th. If, on finding himself in the company of impious men who speak against religion or against her ministers, he laughs with them, or applauds them, through human respect. This is a mortal sin in a grievous matter, and a venial sin in a slight matter. He must disapprove of similar discourses and show his displeasure, and even refute them, if he has the ability and necessary knowledge to do so. If he is afraid to make profession of his faith in such circumstances, and is ashamed of Jesus Christ before men, Jesus Christ will be ashamed of him before His Heavenly Father at the last day.

9th. If he enters into intimate friendship with heretics, or attends their sermons or religious worship. This sin is more or less grievous according to the scandal given and the danger to which he is exposed of losing his faith.

10th. If he neglects for a long time to make acts of faith, or if he does not make them in circumstances where he is bound to make them; for instance, in temptations against faith, when one approaches the sacraments, or is in the danger of death.

Sins against Hope.— A person sins against hope in two ways; by despair and by presumption.

A person sins by despair: 1st. If he does not trust in God's mercy and despairs of obtaining pardon of his sins, either on account of their number, or on account of their enormity, as Cain and Judas did. However great and numerous our crimes may be, we must always have the confidence that God will pardon them if we are truly sorry for them.

2d. If he despairs of being able to correct himself of his sins or bad habits, or to surmount the obstacles to salvation which daily present themselves. If you are assailed by this temptation, remember the words of St. Paul, that *God is faithful in His promises, and He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able* (I. Cor. x. 13).

3d. If he lacks confidence in divine providence with regard to his temporal wants, like those who are always afraid of lacking the

necessaries of life, of dying of hunger, or who, in their wants, such as illness, poverty, affliction, never have any recourse to God, although they neglect nothing on the part of men. Undoubtedly in the different trials to which we are subject, God does not forbid us to have recourse to natural means, to physicians, to remedies, in order to obtain relief; but He also wishes us to ask His aid before all, because He is the source of all good, and because without divine help all the rest is useless.

4th. If he is wanting in submission to the will of God, in outward accidents which befall him, as those who, in a great loss, in sickness, or in the death of a parent or friend, give way to discouragement, compare their lot to that of others more favored than they are, curse themselves, murmur and blaspheme against Providence, and allow themselves to be carried away by blind anger. In such painful and sad circumstances, a good Christian resigns himself to God's will and bows to the hand that strikes and chastises him; he submits himself to divine Providence and says: *My God, Thy will be done!*

A person sins by presumption: 1st. If he offends God for the very reason that He is good and merciful and will always pardon the sinner, expecting that God will as readily remit a great number of sins as a small number, or that during sickness, or in old age, there will be time enough to convert himself. To act and reason in this manner is to trifle with God and His attributes. If God is good, He is also just, and it belongs to Him alone to tell when He will pardon and when He will punish.

2d. If he thinks he can convert himself, or do good and save himself by his own strength, without the help of God. Faith teaches us, on the contrary, that, without grace, we cannot even have a thought meritorious for salvation.

3d. If he flatters himself that he will save his soul even without abandoning a disorderly life, or without renouncing his criminal habits, or the occasion of sin, or if he expects to obtain pardon for his sins without doing penance, or without receiving the sacraments, and solely through the practice of prayer or alms.

4th. If he does not make acts of hope from time to time, especially when he feels himself inclined to discouragement, in illness, in reverses of fortune, or when preparing to receive the sacraments.

Sins against Charity. — A person sins against charity, if he is wanting in the love which he owes to God and his neighbor.

To sin against the love we owe to our neighbor is to bear him hatred, to have desires of revenge, to remember offenses, to be jealous at the success of others, to detract, to calumniate, to sow discord by reports, to cause scandal, and to neglect the spiritual or temporal works of mercy. Let us examine how a person can fail in the love which he owes to God.

A person sins against the love of God: 1st. If he bears a hatred against God. This frightful sin is, fortunately, very rare; still, there are people of so monstrous a perversity that they curse God, blaspheme Him, insult religion and its mysteries, and who, in order to save themselves from the punishment of their crimes, would like to annihilate God Himself.

2d. If he loves a creature as much as he loves God or more than he loves God. This is the sin of the covetous, the drunkards and unchaste, who make a god of their belly, of their money, or of a vile creature.

3d. If he deliberates or hesitates whether he should commit a sin. For example, whether or not he should receive his Easter communion; whether he should accuse himself of a grievous sin of which he is guilty; whether he should return to bad company. Even though the temptation is overcome, the hesitation or doubt is a sin.

4th. If he has an aversion for pious persons, or mocks and despises them on account of their piety.

5th. If he takes pleasure in offending God; for example, in seeing others behave badly, or in hearing obscene words. To laugh at bad things which one sees or hears, instead of feeling sorrow or pain, is the same as approving of them, rendering oneself an accomplice, to a certain point, of the sin of others.

6th. If, through human respect, he does evil or omits his duty. For example, if he is with people who eat meat on Friday, and, through a cowardly fear, he does the same, or if he is with people who do not say their prayers, who do not go to Mass on Sunday, and out of human respect he omits these duties. All these are failings not only against the Christian duty, but also against the love of God.

7th. If he does not offer all his daily actions to God. It is necessary to offer our actions to God if we desire them to be meritorious. It is a pious and excellent custom to offer to God every morning all the actions of the day, and frequently to renew this offering during the day.

8th. If he has a disgust for the things of God, and fulfills his duties only with indifference, carelessness, and voluntary distractions. This is lukewarmness of soul and is a deplorable and dangerous state.

9th. If he does not make acts of love of God in case he is bound to do so. This omission would be a sin, for all who have attained the use of reason, in temptations, before receiving the sacraments, and in danger of death.

Search your heart, my brethren, and inquire about its dispositions. Is your faith firm and immovable, and do you make it the rule of your life? Is your hope firmly grounded in God, and free from despair and presumption? Do you love God above all things, and do you strive to do His holy will in all things, without fear and without human respect?

Bewail your faults of the past, and resolve for the future that your heart shall be firmly established in faith, hope, and charity—and the happiness of heaven that has been promised to those that believe in God, hope in Him, and love Him, will be yours forever. Amen.

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## XVII. INSTRUCTION

### On the First Commandment (*Cont'd*)

There are two ways of sinning against the virtue of religion; by defect or by excess. To sin by defect is not to render to God a sufficient worship, or to be wanting in respect towards Him; to sin by excess is to render him a false or unbecoming worship, opposed to the principles of reason and faith. Sins of defect are irreligion and sacrilege; sins of excess are idolatry and superstition.

I. Irreligion. Those render themselves guilty of the sin of irreligion who neglect their morning and evening prayers, who do not attend those services of the Church which are not of precept, such as Vespers, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the Way of the Cross; who never say the *Angelus*, nor grace before and after meals, who never salute our divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament when they pass a church; in a word, who never think of God, and who completely abandon all practices of piety. Although there is no law that

obliges us to these practices of devotion, it is sinful willfully to neglect them.

II. Sacrilege is the profanation of things consecrated to God. This profanation is of three kinds: the profanation of persons, of things, and of places.

1st. The profanation of *persons* consists in outraging persons consecrated to God by Holy Orders, as priests, and other ministers of the Church; or by the vow of religion, as religious persons of both sexes. The injury done to them is done to God Himself; and to go so far as to strike them would be to incur the penalty of excommunication, the absolution from which is reserved to the Pope or to the bishop.

2d. The profanation of *holy things*. Holy things are divided into five classes: 1st. The sacraments, the holy oils, and the ceremonies of the Church; 2d. The sacred vessels which come in contact with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and which have received from the bishop a special consecration; the purificators, corporals, and palls which have been used in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. A layman is not permitted to touch these objects without the permission of the bishop or priest; 3d. The texts of Sacred Scripture, relics of saints, holy images, and holy water; 4th. The ornaments used by the priest in the functions of the sacred ministry and the ornaments used in adorning the altar. It would be sinful to make use of these ornaments for profane purposes; 5th. Church property, movable and immovable, such as the money of confraternities, collections for the souls in purgatory, and lands whose revenues are destined for the parochial service. These objects, although not blessed by the Church, have a sacred destination, and no one could appropriate them unjustly without rendering himself guilty of sacrilegious theft. The profanation of holy things differs in grievousness according to the nature of the thing profaned. The profanation of the sacraments, especially of the Holy Eucharist, would be a fearful sacrilege, much more grievous than the profanation of the sacred vessels or holy oils. To parody and mock religious ceremonies would also be a great sacrilege.

3d. The profanation of *holy places*. Holy places are the churches in which the Blessed Sacrament is kept, chapels, private oratories, and cemeteries.

A person profanes a church by unbecoming postures, by talking without necessity, by laughing or by amusing himself in the house of God. Actions of impurity or fights in a church would be frightful

profanations. There are cases of profanation where the holy sacrifice of the Mass could not be offered until the consecration of the church is reëstablished by the bishop.

Chapels and private oratories must also be respected, because they are blessed places, and because the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered in them from time to time. Let us also respect the cemeteries which, besides being blessed, are so well calculated to inspire us with piety, recollection, and religious sadness.

III. Idolatry.—The word idolatry means the adoration of idols. It is the sin of giving to creatures a worship which is due to God alone, as was done by the pagans, who adored the sun, the moon, and animals. Thanks to the light of the Gospel, this absurd and abominable worship no longer exists among us; but there is a kind of idolatry that still exists and which is hardly less injurious to God, namely, that of the passions. Riches, intemperance, and voluptuousness, often receive the same honor to-day which was formerly rendered to Mercury, Bacchus, or Venus. The covetous man makes a god of his money, the drunkard of liquor, and the impure man of the object of his infamous passion. To the worship of these odious deities, man sacrifices both his soul and eternity. What shameful excess and what deplorable blindness of man's heart to abandon and to despise God, who is the author of all good, and to attach himself to deceitful and frail creatures, which, instead of offering true happiness, only leave in the soul a frightful void, remorse, and shame.

IV. Superstition.—Superstition is a worship rendered to the devil, or an invocation addressed to him directly or indirectly to obtain effects beyond human strength, or revelations beyond human knowledge. It is also a superfluous worship employed in the exercise of religion, vain and useless practices, authorized neither by the Church nor by any lawful custom. Apart from idolatry, which is the greatest and most fatal of all superstitions, there are four kinds: vain observance, divination, magic, and witchcraft.

1st. *Vain Observance.*—Those are guilty of vain observance, who believe that there are lucky and unlucky days, in the healing of certain diseases, or who employ, to cure the sick, words, signs, or actions, which naturally cannot produce any effect. There are some who pretend to cure animals by means of an herb, which they do not even give the sick beast; others base themselves on merely accidental meetings or events, such as the number of thirteen at a table, or the upsetting of a salt

cellar, in order to draw omens of fortune or misfortune. If there is anything serious or true in these observances, it can be only through the intervention of the devil, and would be sinful; but, generally, vain observances are mere trifles in which only weak and diseased minds can find anything serious.

2d. *Divination.*— Those sin by divination who invoke the help of the devil, either expressly or tacitly, to know hidden or secret things of which they cannot have any knowledge by natural means, and those who consult soothsayers. If a compact is made with the devil in express words, the sin would be very grievous, and even if it were only a tacit one, the sin might be also grievous, if simplicity or ignorance does not excuse it.

May fortune-tellers be consulted? No; because if fortune-tellers could really foretell the future, they could have their knowledge only from the devil, and in that case to invoke the aid of fortune-tellers would be to invoke the aid of the devil himself. But, generally, fortune-tellers, or witches, who pretend to read the future and to know what is not given to man here below to know, are only impostors, miserable mountebanks who, by tricks or ambiguous words, can satisfy everybody, and seek only to get money by satisfying an idle curiosity. It is astonishing to find people simple enough to let themselves be deceived by such impostors!

What must we think of the conjurer's wand, of animal magnetism, of hypnotism of which we hear so much at present? It is forbidden to make use of the conjurer's wand with a view to finding lost objects, or of finding the lost limits of a property. There cannot be any connection between the wand and these lost objects. But it is not the same in regard to the searching for springs, metals, mines, and minerals, because according to the opinion of learned men, gases or emanations which escape from buried metals or from subterranean waters may exercise a certain influence and cause certain movements, either on the wand itself, or on the hands of the one who holds it. However, it is necessary to renounce all intervention of the devil before making use of any of these means.

Animal *magnetism or hypnotism* consists in causing a person to fall asleep by means of certain passes, and in causing him to reveal remedies good for certain diseases, or to make other still more wonderful revelations. Is the practice of hypnotism lawful, and, if so, how far? Some grave theologians have condemned the practice of hypnotism

absolutely, chiefly on account of the abuses which they deemed inseparable from it; but other standard authorities teach that hypnotism may not be universally condemned as evil in itself, although it is unquestionably dangerous. This latter opinion seems to be the more common one. Hence, the question remaining uncertain, and since Rome has not yet given an answer on the subject, we would not dare to say that the practice of hypnotism is absolutely forbidden.

What must we believe of the "Turning Tables"? The practice of Turning Tables, which originated about forty years ago in America, and which soon spread to Europe and the entire world, has been condemned as superstitious by several bishops, especially by the archbishop of Quebec, in Canada. The tables can be made to dance by physical means, indeed, but they cannot be made to answer questions, to foretell the future, or to reveal things of the next world without supernatural intervention — and the so-called spirit-rappers are nothing but demons. Therefore, to consult these spirit-rappers, even only through curiosity or amusement, is sinful.

3d. *Magic.*— There are two kinds of magic: *natural magic* which consists in performing extraordinary and astonishing feats, but by natural means, such as skill, suppleness of the body, or the knowledge of the laws of physics; and *superstitious magic*, which is the art of producing effects which surpass the forces of human nature, by the power of an express or tacit compact with the devil. Such was probably the magic practiced by the magicians of the Pharaoh of Egypt, when they imitated the miracles of Moses. Natural magic is not forbidden, provided it is not abused so as to deceive the simple and to get their money unjustly; but superstitious magic is a grievous sin, both for those who exercise it and for those who consult it. This kind of superstition is fortunately not very common, and hardly known in our country.

4th. *Sorcery or Witchcraft.*— Witchcraft is a diabolical art which consists in casting spells and thus causing diseases or infirmities, either to men or to animals, by a spirit of hatred and revenge. We sometimes meet persons who complain of being under spells. This might be true in very rare circumstances, because we find examples in history, and because the Church has threatened sorcerers with very severe punishments. But we must not easily believe in witchcraft, for the evil most often exists only in the imagination. However, in a case of sorcery one should have recourse to prayer, fasting, and

sometimes, perhaps, to the exorcisms of the Church. But no one would be permitted to invoke the aid of the person who cast the spell, in order to be delivered from it, because this is forbidden by the sacred canons.

Such are, my brethren, the sins opposed to the virtue of religion. Examine your conscience and inquire whether you are guilty before God in any of these points. Examine yourselves particularly in regard to the duty of prayer, the dispositions you had for confession, communion, the respect due to holy places, to holy things, to persons consecrated to God. Oh! with how many negligences and irreverences must you not perhaps reproach yourselves! Cry out with regret and bitterness: O my God, I acknowledge that until now I have not truly practiced the virtue of religion, that I have not been exact in my duties of piety, not recollected before the adorable sacrament of our altars, or little respectful towards Thy ministers. Pardon me, O Lord, pardon my indifference and impiety. In future I shall be more faithful in rendering Thee the worship and adoration I owe to Thee, never forgetting the words of Thy commandment: *Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God.* Amen.

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## XVIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the First Commandment (*Concluded*)

I. In the preceding instruction we have seen that the first commandment commands us to adore God and to serve Him alone: *I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me.* Must we conclude from this, as Protestants do, that it is forbidden to honor the saints, and that the honor which we render to them is an act of idolatry? No, my brethren, because this worship essentially differs from that which we render to God. The worship we render to God is a worship of adoration, by which we acknowledge Him as the sovereign Lord and Master of all things, and which, consequently, is due to Him alone; whilst the worship which we render to the saints and to the Blessed Virgin Mary is only an act of honor and

of invocation, by which we acknowledge them as the friends of God and our intercessors before His throne. The Church has consecrated three terms to express the difference which she makes between these various worships. She calls the first the worship of *Latria* or of adoration; the second, worship of *Hyperdulia* or of great veneration, the honor which we render to the Blessed Virgin; and the third, worship of *Dulia*, that is, of homage and invocation, which we render to the other saints. This is why, when we address God we say: *Lord have mercy on us; Lord grant us the graces that are necessary for us; Lord pardon us our sins;* whilst, when we invoke the Blessed Virgin or the other saints, we simply say: *Pray for us.* In fact, the saints can grant us nothing of themselves; all they can do for us is to assist us.

The worship of the saints, thus understood, far from being reprehensible as tainted with idolatry, can only be, on the contrary, agreeable to God and very beneficial for us.

1st. It is *very agreeable to God.* What were the saints upon earth, and what are they now in heaven?

Upon earth they were great servants of God and accomplished models of all virtues. Humility, meekness, purity, charity seemed to be personified in them. All their care, all their ambition was to glorify the Lord and to render themselves useful to their fellow-men. Their life was, as that of their divine Master, the faithful practice of the Gospel. One might say that they were angels clothed in a mortal body.

What are they now in heaven? Their virtue has received its reward. In the bosom of God they partake of His eternal felicity, and are surrounded with light and glory; they are His friends, His beloved children, and are happy forever; they form His court and are His devoted ministers, whom He has made the depositaries of a part of His sovereign authority.

Can God feel offended at seeing us rendering homage to the virtues and grandeurs of the saints? It is God Himself who has engraved in our souls this sentiment which fills us with admiration for all that is great, generous, heroic, which moves us to honor men who have practiced the greatest virtues, led a pure and perfect life, and rendered the greatest services to their fellow-men. Hence, great men are overwhelmed with honors and distinguished, their deeds are celebrated with pomp and festivity; statues, triumphal arches, and mementos are

erected in their honor. Why should we be forbidden to do for the saints what everybody does for great men and for heroes?

Far from condemning the homage we offer to the saints, God would feel offended if we did not honor them. We need not fear to offend God in honoring those who have so faithfully served and loved Him, and whom He has taken to Himself to be glorified forever in heaven. The honor which we render to them does not stop with the saints themselves; it ascends to God the author of their sanctity and salvation, the source of all good. The saints are to us only souls overwhelmed with God's gifts, and established as intercessors to restore that most intimate communion between the Church upon earth and the Church in heaven.

2d. The veneration of the saints is *very beneficial to us*. This veneration, by reminding us of their noble actions, by placing before our eyes the spectacle of their combats and generous sacrifices, animates us to walk in their footsteps; it upholds us in our weakness, encourages us in our failings, strengthens us against temptations, and assists us to rise out of our sins. Full of courage and confidence, in spite of the assaults of the devil and the raging of the passions, we say with St. Augustine: "Can I not do what the saints have done?"

The veneration of the saints is especially beneficial to us, because they enjoy great credit in heaven and have the greatest charity towards men. Being loved and blessed by God and having easy access to the throne of His Majesty and of His infinite mercy, what can they not do by their prayers? What graces, what favors can God refuse them? Surely God will listen to the prayers of the apostles who devoted their lives to the spreading of the Gospel, of the martyrs who spilled their blood for the faith, of holy men and women of all conditions of life who despised the world, conquered their passions and surmounted so many obstacles out of love for Him. Moreover, the saints know our needs by the favor of God, they see our miseries and hear our vows; and the charity which animated them while upon earth is not extinguished in heaven. It is always a living flame, always burning, always nourished by the light of God. Full of compassion for our weakness, and of fear on account of the dangers that threaten us, they interest themselves in us, they receive our prayers, and never cease to implore the help of God in our favor. They remember that we are their brethren, the members of the same family, and it is their greatest desire that we should share their happiness.

Let us place our confidence in them, let us implore them to intercede for us. They will always be our best friends and our most powerful and most devoted protectors.

The veneration of the saints is, therefore, lawful and is based upon the constant teaching of the Church. In the earliest times, and in the time of the most violent persecutions, she raised altars to their honor in the catacombs, and when better days came she built magnificent temples in their honor and instituted feasts to celebrate their memory. In the holy Council of Trent, she declared that the veneration of the saints was wholesome, useful, praiseworthy, and agreeable to God, who desires to be glorified in His saints, and she pronounced anathema against any one daring to maintain the contrary.

II. Let us pass to the veneration of holy relics. By relics we understand the members, the garments, the bones, or other things that belonged to the saints. Is this veneration idolatrous, is it superstitious, as Protestants claim? God forbid; nothing is more lawful, nothing more praiseworthy, than the veneration of relics.

Do we not cherish and preserve with the greatest care anything that has belonged to some one dear to us, to a parent, to a friend, to a benefactor? Do we not respect the mortal remains of a celebrated man, of an illustrious prince? With what eagerness do we not seek to obtain the furniture that served for their use; what pains do we not take, and what expenses do we not incur to procure some part of their mortal remains, or even objects that remind us of them? Why should it not be equally lawful to venerate the relics of saints? Why should we not honor and preserve most carefully the mortal remains of those illustrious personages who, by their virtues and good works, deserve our love, our gratitude, and our respect? The veneration of sacred relics has been practiced at all times in the Church. The Christians of the first ages of the Church buried the bodies of the martyrs with great respect, and even collected the drops of their blood which stained the earth and the instruments of their torture, to place in their churches and upon their altars. Since that time it has been always the desire of the Church, either that the altars should be erected over the sepulchres of saints, or that there should be relics inserted under the marble slabs upon which the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered. It has been always her desire that relics should be kept in vessels of gold or silver, and carried in procession with all solemnity. Heaven itself has through countless miracles authorized the veneration of

sacred relics. The dead were raised to life again on the tomb of Eliseus; the linens or handkerchiefs which had touched St. Paul wrought the healing of the sick. The history of the Church is full of such examples; this caused a Father of the Church to say that the sepulchres of the servants of the Crucified were more glorified than the palaces of kings.

Let us, therefore, respect and venerate the relics of the saints. To possess one of these relics is to possess a treasure. But we must be careful: 1st. That the relics are authentic and that they have received the approbation of ecclesiastical authority; 2d. In honoring them, not to attribute any power to the relics themselves, the veneration which you render them being referred to the saints to whom they belong.

III. The veneration of images and of the cross of Jesus Christ is not less lawful than the veneration of relics. Most unjustly do heretics accuse us of idolatry. There is an essential difference between the honor which we render to pictures, to crosses or statues, and the honor which pagans render to their idols of stone or wood. The pagans adored their idols as containing the deity, and having the power to give them what they asked. We, on the contrary, acknowledge no power, no property, no virtue in the images themselves. All the honor which we pay to these material objects we intend for those whom they represent. When we kneel before a cross, it is Jesus Christ who died upon a cross whom we wish to honor and adore; when we kneel before an image of the Blessed Virgin or some other saint, it is not the paper, it is not the wood or stone which we intend to honor, but the saint whose image is represented.

In all ages the Church has venerated crosses and images. Nicephorus states that St. Luke painted portraits of the Saviour, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. The historian Eusebius tells us that he saw the statue of the Saviour placed in front of the house of the woman who had been healed of a flow of blood by touching the hem of His garment, and which she herself had caused to be made as a token of gratitude. Several General Councils, such as the second Council of Nice and the Council of Trent, have condemned as heretical the doctrine of the Iconoclasts, who decried the veneration of images, and who in destroying them thought they were doing an act of piety.

Far from being reprehensible, the veneration of holy images cannot but be very useful to us, because these pious objects remind us of the

saints and of their virtues. Holy images are the books of the ignorant as well as of the learned, they strike the attention of all, everybody can understand them. St. Theresa never tired looking on the image of Jesus Christ. St. Charles found such an attraction in meditating on the agony of the Saviour in the Garden of Olives, in a chapel where it was pictured, that he often passed whole hours in contemplation. Let us, therefore, venerate the sacred images. Let us always have them in our rooms and at our bedside. A house without a pious picture or statue is not a Christian house. Let us especially honor and respect the Crucifix, on account of the great mysteries which it represents. The cross is the august symbol of redemption. Can a Christian be indifferent to it?

Let us adore Jesus Christ who died on the cross; let us honor the saints who are our protectors, our models, and let us kneel with respect before their relics and images, and let us try to imitate the example of the saints and walk in their footsteps, in order to enjoy with them the happiness of heaven. Amen.

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## XIX. INSTRUCTION

### On the Second Commandment

*Thou Shalt Not Take the Name of Thy God in Vain*

The Second Commandment, *Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain*, forbids unnecessary oaths, blasphemy, and cursing; and, at the same time, it commands us to respect His holy name and to fulfill the vows we have made. In this instruction I will speak only of what the second commandment forbids.

I. Let us begin with *the oath.* To swear is to call on God to witness that what we say is true, or that we will keep our promise. We can call God as witness in two ways: By words, or by signs. We call God to witness by word when we say, for instance: *God is my witness, I swear, I swear by heaven and earth.* We take Him to witness by sign, when we place our hand upon the Gospel, or when

we raise it with the intention of swearing, as is done in courts of justice.

The expression *This is as sure as I am here, as sure as the sun shines, or as sure as I shall die*, and others similar, are oaths only when they are said with the intention of swearing. We may say the same of such expressions as *on my faith, on the faith of a Christian, on the faith of an honest man.* However, as these words have quite the sound of an oath, and as they might scandalize those that hear them, a good Christian ought carefully to avoid them. As to the expression: *This is as true as there is a God in heaven, who sees, who hears me*, they are not oaths, but blasphemies, and, undoubtedly, one sins more or less grievously, according to the intention and the malice. How can any one, without failing in the respect which he owes to God, compare any fact, however certain it may be, with the great truth of the existence and knowledge of God?

Are oaths sinful in themselves? No, on the contrary they are acts of religion which honor God in confessing that He is the infallible truth. The prophet Isaias tells us that those who swear by the Lord will be glorified. God Himself, to strengthen our confidence, sometimes had recourse to the oath; and He encourages us to imitate Him; *You shall fear the Lord your God*, He says, *and you shall swear by His name* (Deut. VI. 13). The holy patriarchs also sometimes made use of the oath, and Jesus Christ Himself swore when the glory of His Father and the salvation of men required this.

But there are three conditions necessary for a lawful oath: truth, justice, and discretion. *Thou shalt swear as the Lord liveth, in truth and in judgment, and in justice* (Jer. IV. 2); that is, the thing which one affirms must be true, or we must believe it to be true; that which one promises must be good and just, and we must have the intention of keeping our promise; finally the oath must be made only with discretion and through necessity. When one of these three conditions is wanting, the oath is not permitted.

1st. What you swear to must be true, or at least you must believe it to be such; for if it were not true, the oath, far from being a religious act, would be a perjury. Perjury is an abominable crime before God and man. It offends God, because it invokes His testimony in favor of a lie, as if to make God the accomplice of an untruth. It offends man, because it destroys the last guarantee which can be given of the truth of our words, it deceives our neighbor in the most shameful

manner, and causes trouble and disorder in the relations of society. All nations have shown their horror of this crime, and they punish it with very severe penalties. We need not be surprised that, in Holy Scripture, God threatens the perjurer with the most terrible curses, and that He declares through the mouth of the prophet Zacharias: *His maledictions shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof* (Zach. v. 4).

To swear falsely is not only to affirm as true what one knows to be false, or as false what one knows to be true, but also to declare that to be certain which one knows is doubtful. When a false oath is taken in a court of justice, it becomes a reserved case in some dioceses; and the perjurer is obliged to repair all the damages which are the consequence of it.

2d. The thing which is promised by an oath must be good and honest, and the swearer must have the intention of fulfilling his promise. If the thing promised is bad, if, for example, it is prejudicial to others, or if it is contrary to good morals, or even if the thing is good, but there is no intention on the part of the swearer to keep his engagements, the oath would be unlawful and criminal, because it would be making God a guarantee for evil dispositions or one's own bad will. All theologians hold that every one is obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to keep his lawful oaths, unless it is impossible. But it would be sinful to keep a sacrilegious promise if the swearer has, so to say, associated God with his crime. This would be a double offense. There is a sin in swearing to do a bad or unjust thing, and a still more grievous sin in fulfilling the wicked promise.

3d. Swearing must be done with discretion, that is. after mature reflection, and only after being convinced of the truth of what one swears to, or of the possibility of keeping the engagement which one wishes to take. Causes of real necessity are, when one is called to swear before a court of justice or before some magistrate, to whom one has submitted a dispute, or when assuming some public office.

Outside of these cases of necessity, let us not swear; but according to the precept of the Gospel, let us content ourselves with saying *Yea, yea; no, no*, (Matt. v. 37). I shall do it, or I shall not do it. Let us not think that our words will not be believed without an oath. On the contrary, our words will be all the more credited. Nothing inspires us with so much doubt, and often nothing shows better the

falsity and the dissimulation of a person than the unfortunate habit of unnecessary swearing.

II. The next thing forbidden by the Second Commandment, is *blasphemy*. Blasphemy consists in words, or a discourse injurious to God, to the saints, or to religion. Thus, a person blasphemes if he attributes to God what is not becoming to Him, if he refuses to Him what belongs to Him, or if he places certain creatures on an equal footing with God, by words like: *This is as true as there is a God, as God sees me, as God hears me.* . . . A person also blasphemes if he speaks of God or to God with contempt and in a haughty tone, as did the Jews, when they bent their knee before the cross and said: *If thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross, and we will believe in Thee;* or like Julian the Apostate, who, finding himself mortally wounded, took a handful of his blood and threw it towards heaven, and cried out: *Galilean, thou hast conquered.* A person also blasphemes if he associates the name of God with pagan expressions, such as "In the name of all the gods," or if he says, "May the devil take me if I do not speak the truth"; "May I drop dead if I do not speak the truth."

Blasphemy also includes injurious words against the saints or against religion. Thus, those blaspheme who rail at or about the saints in heaven; who attribute to them vices or faults, who mock at their miracles, at their canonization, or at the honors one renders them. Those blaspheme who deny to the Blessed Virgin some of her august prerogatives, such as her immaculate conception, her perpetual virginity, her divine maternity. Finally, those blaspheme who speak evil of the Catholic Church, of her doctrine, of her commandments, or who pretend that all religions are good, and that Protestants can save themselves as well in their religion as in ours.

Blasphemy is a very great crime, for, says St. Jerome, the blasphemer attacks the very perfections of God. In the other crimes it is the inordinate love of pleasures, of goods or honors, which makes the sin; but in blasphemy it is the contempt and hatred shown to God Himself. The impure, the thief, the drunkard, may find a kind of excuse in the violence of the passions that drag them along; but what excuse can he allege who blasphemes the holy name of God only through hatred or contempt? In the Old Law the most terrible chastisements were decreed against blasphemers. The son of an Israelite woman was condemned to be stoned to death for having blasphemed in a quarrel.

The army of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, composed of a hundred and forty-five thousand men, was exterminated in one night by the destroying angel, and Sennacherib himself, on his return to Nineveh, was assassinated by his own children, because he had blasphemed in saying that the God of Israel could no more resist his armies than the gods of his own nation. Under the New Law the most severe punishments have been enacted against blasphemers, not only by the Church, but also sometimes by Christian princes. St. Louis, king of France, ordered that the tongue of convicted blasphemers should be pierced with a redhot iron.

Blasphemy, besides outraging God, also draws down great misfortunes upon the head of the blasphemer. Who has not heard of the famous apparition of the Blessed Virgin to the shepherds of La Salette, and of the prediction she made to them of the terrible afflictions which would befall France, on account of its blasphemies and the profanation of Sunday, if the people did not hasten to do penance? This was in 1846. The admonitions of heaven were not listened to, and I need not remind you of the stormy revolution which broke out in that unfortunate country two years afterwards, and which caused such great misfortunes to both Church and State; nor of that long series of pestilential diseases of men, animals, and even plants, which has not ceased to afflict the country since that time. These are solemn lessons which God is pleased to give from time to time; and woe to us if we do not profit by them.

III. The Second Commandment also forbids *cursing*. Cursing is to wish evil to oneself or to others, even to inanimate things. For instance when one says: "May the devil take you"; "May I die, if I do not do . . . if I do not say"; "May my hands, my arms, my feet wither away"; "I wish I had never been born"; "I wish I had been smothered, strangled in my cradle;" "May God damn my soul. . . ."

Alas! my brethren, these and similar expressions are heard only too frequently. Fathers and mothers curse their children, husbands curse their wives, or wives curse their husbands; everywhere we hear persons cursing everybody and everything.

Cursing, undoubtedly, is a great sin, at least when one acts with reflection and with the desire that the curses should come into effect. If Jesus Christ condemns to hell-fire any one who says an injurious word to his brother, what will be the lot of those who daily consign them-

selves or consign others to death or to hell? And even if one did not desire that such words should have their effect, it is always a sin, because it is always outrageous and scandalous language, a language essentially opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is a spirit of peace and meekness. It is true, if the curses have for their object only inanimate things or irrational creatures, if there is no real intention to hurt, the sin is not so great. But it is always a sin, because to curse the creature, is, in some manner, to curse the Creator Himself.

Therefore, you must carefully avoid these odious words inspired by hatred or anger. And of what use are all the curses which you make either against yourselves or against others? And what would you say if God, justly irritated, should listen to them? If, for example, when you say "May the thunder strike you," He would cause the lightning to strike the person whom you curse? It would be only what you deserve because you demanded it. And do not tell me that it is only in anger that you speak thus. This is an idle and false justification. You cannot excuse yourself for one sin by another; and that violent passion which pushes you on to cursing is only another sin, and renders you all the more blameworthy before God. Do not say, too, that it is only a habit, for we are obliged to get rid of all bad habits.

Such are, my brethren, the sins forbidden by the Second Commandment; unnecessary oaths, blasphemy, and cursing. Let us examine our consciences, and if we find ourselves guilty on any of these points, let us humbly ask pardon of God for our offenses, and take firm resolutions to do better in future, to repair the past by entertaining in our hearts Christian sentiments, and by always speaking with profound respect for God and with a sincere love for our brethren. Amen.

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## XX. INSTRUCTION

### On the Second Commandment (*Concluded*)

In the preceding instruction you have seen, my brethren, what the Second Commandment forbids; there remains for us to speak of what it commands. It commands principally two things: Respect for the holy name of God, and the fulfillment of the vows one has made.

I. *Respect for the Holy Name of God.*— This is a consequence of the very words of the precept: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain"; for to take the name of the Lord in vain, is not only to swear falsely and unnecessarily, but also to pronounce His holy and adorable name without respect.

The name of God is holy and terrible, says the prophet (Ps. III. 9); and we should celebrate its praises *from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same* (Ps. CXII. 3). Under the Old Law it was forbidden to the people of Israel even to pronounce this dread name. The high-priest alone was permitted to pronounce the name of Jehovah, and then only once a year.

What is the name of God? It is the name of Him who is the principle as well as the end of all things, who reunites in Himself all possible and imaginable perfections, and before whom all the heavenly powers bend in adoration, chanting continually: *Holy, holy, holy is the God of hosts.*

The New Law, which is a law of love, does not forbid us to pronounce and invoke this holy name. On the contrary, it invites us to invoke it frequently, and it is found repeatedly in the prayers which the Church teaches us. Therefore, we can and even ought to pronounce and invoke it; and the more we invoke it the more glory and honor we render to it. Besides the invocation of this adorable name will be for us a source of consolations and graces in the midst of our troubles and needs, if we invoke it with all the respect, the confidence, and the love which it deserves.

But be very careful how you pronounce it. You would commit sin if, with a deliberate intention, you were to mingle it with your fits of passion, your quarrels, your jokes, or even with your serious discourses without necessity. Oh! how ignorant or impious are those Christians who have continually the holy name of God in their mouths, and who are not afraid to associate it with the most unbecoming words, with the coarsest expressions, and with the most frightful curses!

II. *The Fulfillment of Vows One Has Made.* This is an important matter, and which requires some developments.

1st. *What Is a Vow?*— A vow is a deliberate promise made to God to do something which it is better to do than not to do. The vow is a promise . . . and not a simple resolution or project to do a certain thing; as, for example, to make a pilgrimage to a chapel consecrated to the Blessed Virgin or to some other shrine. . . . If it is

only a resolution there is no rigorous obligation to fulfill it. Here many persons deceive themselves. They make a resolution to make a novena, to make a pilgrimage, and they think they have made a vow. There cannot be any vow as long as one does not promise God to do something pleasing to Him with the intention to oblige oneself to do it. A vow does not consist in reciting certain prayers during a certain number of days, or in offering Masses in honor of a saint, or in performing any other good work; it consists in the promise made to God to do a certain act of piety, of charity, or of mortification. It is an engagement which one makes and which one cannot violate without sin.

A vow is a *deliberate* promise made with a thorough knowledge of the matter, with all the attention usually given to serious things and with a free will; and a promise *made to God*, because the vow is an act of supreme adoration which belongs to God alone. A vow cannot be made to a saint; when any one says that he has made a vow to a saint or to the Blessed Virgin, he simply means that he has placed himself under their special protection, to obtain from God, through their intercession, the graces of which he is in need. Finally, we say that a vow is the *promise . . . of a thing which it is better to do than not to do.* A vow cannot be made to do something bad, as theft, revenge, nor to do something indifferent, such as taking a walk; nor of a thing which would hinder a greater good, as marriage which excludes the more excellent state of virginity. The thing one promises to God must be good and useful, such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving; the practice of chastity, pilgrimages, and other acts of devotion.

2d. There are four kinds of vows: The absolute vow, the conditional vow, the simple and the solemn vow.

The *absolute* vow depends upon no condition, such as: "I vow to give twenty-five dollars to the poor." The *conditional* vow depends upon some contingency; for example, I make a vow to make a pilgrimage if I recover my health. A *simple* vow is one which one makes, either in public or in private, but which is not solemnly accepted by the Church, and from which bishops generally can dispense. A *solemn* vow is one which is acknowledged, accepted, and in some way sanctified by the Church, as are the three vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity made in certain religious orders, and the dispensation from which is reserved to the Pope.

3d. Three things are necessary that a vow made be valid: Knowledge, liberty, and the power to do what is promised. *First*, knowledge

is necessary for all moral actions and with more reason is it necessary in an action so important as a vow. Thus, an insane person, a man in a fit of passion, a man who is drunk or delirious, a very young child, and any one whose ignorance is so great that he does not know either the nature or the force of a vow, cannot make a vow; and if he made any it would be null and void. *Second*, liberty. A boy under the age of fourteen, and a girl under the age of twelve, cannot, according to the general opinion of theologians, make solemn vows, because the Church would not accept them. They may, however, if their reason be sufficiently developed, make simple vows. So, also, vows made through compulsion or great fear would be invalid. Thus if a girl consents to be a religious only in order to avoid great evils with which her father threatens her, her religious vows would not be valid. But if the fear with which she is inspired should not be unjust, or if it should be derived from an interior cause, such as a grave illness, her vows would not be null and void. *Third*, the thing vowed must be within the power of the one who makes the vow. Children, before the age of puberty, cannot make certain vows without the consent of the parents; neither can a husband without the consent of his wife, nor the wife without the consent of her husband, in regard to things for which they depend one upon another.

4th. Is it useful to make vows? Yes, it is very useful and very praiseworthy to make them, provided they are made with great prudence. It is incontestable that a work performed through a vow is more agreeable to God than otherwise, because, besides the ordinary merit which is proper to it, it has also the merit of being consecrated by religion, and because in obliging ourselves by a vow, we offer to God a greater gift, on account of the sacrifice we make of our liberty. In the homage we render to God by the vow, we imitate the generosity of the man who gives to his friend, not only the fruit of the tree but the tree itself, not only the use of a thing but the thing itself. At all times, even under the Mosaic law, vows were made, and God was often pleased to bless them in a special manner. In the history of the Church, how many miracles were wrought and how many graces obtained in consequence of vows! Clovis, King of France, seeing his army in danger of being conquered by the Allemani (the Germans), made a vow to embrace the Christian religion if he were victorious over his enemies, and he gained a complete victory. About two hundred years ago, the city of Marseilles was ravaged by a frightful

pest, and its pious bishop and principal inhabitants made a vow to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the pest ceased. Without going back so many years, read the history of Our Lady of Lourdes, of Our Lady of Einsiedlen, in Switzerland, of St. Anne of Beaupre, in Canada, and you will find circumstantial and authentic details of a number of miraculous healings and all kinds of favors obtained through vows.

5th. But be careful, my brethren, not to make vows too easily, because if the engagement is once made it must be kept. Persons are sometimes very imprudent in this regard. In some great danger or sickness, or in a time of fervor, vows are made without sufficient reflection, and when the danger is over the vow is forgotten. A vow is a serious thing, and there is danger of grievous sin in neglecting to fulfill it. A vow is like an oath made to God, and the oath once accepted we are obliged to comply with it under pain of committing perjury. When you make a vow, it is as if you said: "Lord, I promise this to Thee, and I testify by Thy infinite power and justice that I will be faithful to it. If I fail in my promise, I offer myself to Thy wrath, and I consent that Thou mayst treat me according to the severity of Thy judgments."

There is nothing more sacred than a vow. We are free to make it or not to make it; but when once we have engaged ourselves, we are bound to fulfill it in the same way that we promised it. Theologians teach that it would be a mortal sin to defer the fulfillment of a vow for two or three years. If we find it impossible or exceedingly difficult to accomplish our vow, one ought to ask to be dispensed from it or to have it changed by some ecclesiastical superior or confessor, who has the power to do so. But before doing so, it would be good to ask a wise confessor for instruction in regard to the matter.

My brethren, take the resolution never to pronounce the holy name of God without respect, never to make a vow without mature reflection, and fulfill exactly any vow you may make. Amen.

## XXI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Third Commandment

*Remember Thou Keep Holy the Sabbath Day*

I. God, after having commanded us to adore Him and Him alone, to honor and respect His holy name, prescribes to us in the third commandment the time when He requires from us a particular worship: *Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day* (Ex. xx. 8). All time belongs to God, indeed, because He is the author of all things. However, as we are all condemned to labor, and as this labor distracts the mind from God and draws it to earthly things, God has set apart one day of the week, to be especially consecrated to His worship.

This particular day was formerly Saturday, as can be seen by the words of the precept: *Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day*. God wished thereby to recall to the mind of man the seventh day on which He rested, after having employed six days in the creation of the universe. It would still be Saturday which we should have to sanctify, if we were under the law of Moses. But the Church, instructed by Jesus Christ, and guided by the Holy Ghost, changed the day to Sunday, called the Lord's Day, and wished that instead of sanctifying the last day of the week, we should sanctify the first. The apostles themselves made this change, for we read in their Acts, as well as in the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and in the writings of the Fathers of the first centuries, that the faithful assembled on the first day of the week to break the bread, to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass and to hear the word of God. The reason that moved them to consecrate the Sunday to the worship of God was, because on Sunday were accomplished the principal mysteries of our holy religion, such as the resurrection of the Redeemer of mankind, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles.

II. Two things are necessary for the sanctification of Sunday: a rest from servile work and the practice of the duties of religion.

Works are of three kinds: *servile*, *liberal*, and *common* works. *Servile* works are those in which the body has a greater part than the mind, and which are performed for wages or gain, as tilling the soil, and the mechanical arts. *Liberal* works are those which depend

more upon the mind than upon the body, and which tend directly, not to make money, but to cultivate the mind, such as reading, writing, teaching, drawing and music. *Common* works are those which require the exercise of both mind and body, and which are performed indifferently by all classes of peoples, rich or poor, masters or servants, and of which gain is not the determinating motive, as games, hunting, fishing, traveling, etc.

*Liberal* works are not forbidden on Sunday, provided that they do not keep us away from divine service. *Common* works are also tolerated, unless too much time is employed in them. Thus, if in the intervals between divine service, some hours are devoted to recreation, no harm is done and the Sunday is not violated. But the whole day, or too great a portion of the day, must not be spent in amusement, for that would be contrary to the ends for which Sunday was instituted, which are prayer, the service of God, and our own sanctification. To go hunting, fishing, or traveling on Sunday is not sinful in itself, but to make the Sunday a day of dissipation and amusement, and neglect our religious duties, would be a desecration of the Lord's Day.

III. Servile works are expressly forbidden on Sunday. *Six days thou shalt labor, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord; thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates* (Ex. xx. 9–10). Nothing can be clearer than these words, and the punishment of those who broke the Sabbath was death: *Whosoever shall do any work on that day shall die* (Ex. xxv. 15). An example is stated in the Old Testament of a man who was found gathering dry wood on the Sabbath day, and who was cast into prison and stoned by the people, according to the order of the Lord (Num. xv. 32–36).

All the Doctors of the Church and all the Councils have constantly taught that servile works are forbidden on Sunday. The Fathers of a Council of Paris, held in the year 829, decreed that: "Those who perform servile works on Sundays and holy days obscure the brightness of religion and blaspheme the name of Jesus Christ, and the Lord, justly irritated, will not always defer to the future life His vengeance for these sacrilegious infractions." And they report that in their time of certain persons who despised the divine law and worked on Sunday, some were struck by lightning, others were struck with sickness, others

burnt to death in the fields. They declare that they saw with their own eyes some of these striking punishments, and that they heard of others from witnesses worthy of belief.

It is certainly just and proper not to work on Sunday, for is it not the Lord's day, *the day which the Lord has made*, which he has reserved for Himself, which He has selected among all others in memory of the day of rest after the six days of creation, and which He has especially set apart for His worship? Just as the princes of the earth have their days of great reception and of solemn audience, so also God desires that among the seven days there should be one which men should consecrate entirely to His worship.

Sunday is the day of the inner man, the day set apart to nourish and strengthen man in virtue, to elevate him in mind and heart to God, his last end. There are two men in each of us: the earthly man and the moral man. The earthly man nourishes himself with bread and has six days out of seven in which to provide for his wants; but the moral man lives on prayer, the word of God, meditation, spiritual reading, grace, and the sacraments. To preserve and nourish this moral life in man, what is more useful and necessary than a day of rest from labor and from wordly affairs, so that man can recollect himself, think about the miseries of his soul, and labor more efficaciously for his eternal salvation?

Sunday is the day of the family. The other days of the week often find the members of the family dispersed and isolated; the father looks after his affairs or his work, the mother has her cares in the household, the children are at school or learn some trade. Sunday brings them all together; it unites them around the paternal table and hearth, it procures to them all the purest and sweetest joys of life, and furnishes to them at the same time the occasion to instruct and edify themselves mutually.

Sunday is the day of the parish, the social day of the congregation. God requires worship from the congregation in general as well as from each one in particular, but how could a congregation fulfill this great duty towards God without the Sunday? What would the service and the solemnity of Sunday be without rest from servile work? Moreover, a pastor has to feed the members of his flock, has to instruct them, to prepare them for the sacraments; but how could a pastor do all this, if Sunday were not a day of rest for his people?

The rest from servile work on one day of the week is a necessity for the well-being of man, and even in countries where the religious motive of Sunday is missing the day is a day of rest.

But you may say: "I must make my living and support my children; we must eat on Sunday as well as on other days." Undoubtedly, but who gives you the food of every day? Is it not God Himself? And if it is God from whom all things come, has He not the right to impose rest from work on one day of the week? And if you are so much in need of work in order to live, how does it come that you are so often unoccupied on days when working is allowed; and that after working on Sundays you are idle on Monday? "But is it not better to work on Sunday than to go and spend my money in the saloon or at other amusements?" You should do neither the one nor the other. Sunday was not instituted to spend in amusement and debauchery. After church services, retire to your home, to the joys of your family, and spend some time in pious exercises and in works of charity. "But I must work for an employer who would send me off were I to refuse to work on Sunday." Then go and work for some one else. "But if I leave I cannot find work elsewhere." I admit that a great loss might sometimes be an excuse. But be very careful not to deceive yourself, and not to give as a lawful reason what is only an idle pretext.

IV. What are the servile works which are forbidden on Sunday? They are: 1st. Agricultural labors. It is forbidden to till the soil, to dig, to sow, to reap, to gather in the grain or hay, to plant trees, to cut vines, to repair fences, to repair tools, to gather wood or fruits, to shear sheep, etc. 2d. The various trades, such as those of carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, shoemakers, tailors, locksmiths, etc. 3d. The transportation of merchandise, commodities, except in case of necessity or when custom authorizes it. 4th. Markets, especially those which are held in public. In some countries it is a generally accepted custom that one can buy and sell what is necessary for daily use, as provisions and clothing.

It is the common opinion among theologians that a servile work of two hours would be sufficient to constitute a mortal sin. Sunday does not extend merely from sunrise to sunset, as some seem to believe, but from midnight to midnight.

V. There are reasons which may make servile work lawful on Sunday. These are: dispensation, custom, necessity, piety, and charity.

1st. *Dispensation.*—The Pope can grant a dispensation to the whole Christian world; the bishop can dispense in his diocese; the parish priest in his parish. A confessor has no right to grant dispensations. All he can do is to decide whether the law obliges or not in certain cases presented to him. Dispensation must be asked for in case of doubt whether the reasons for servile work are sufficient. If the reasons are evident, dispensation need not be asked. But it is always best to refer to the parish priest, if possible.

2d. *Custom*, if it is tolerated by the bishop. It is by virtue of custom that barbers are allowed to shave on Sunday, provided, however, that they do not neglect divine service.

3d. *Necessity.*—A harvest may be taken in from the field if it is in danger of being damaged by a storm or rain. Fire may be kept up in smelting furnaces, brick-works, glass-works, and whenever it could not be left to go out without great loss. Meals may be cooked and other necessary household work may be performed. Necessity may also excuse wives, children, and servants, who are forced to work by their husbands, their parents, and masters, and cannot disobey without serious inconvenience.

4th. *Piety* authorizes us to adorn altars for a feast or solemnity, to clean and sweep the church, and to dig graves and bury the dead.

5th. *Charity*, as, for instance, to extinguish a fire, to prepare remedies for the sick, to make clothing for the poor in pressing necessity.

But there is another kind of servile works not less contrary to the sanctification of Sunday, namely *crime* and *disorder*, or the works of the devil. God has given to no person, says the Holy Ghost, a time to commit sin, and much less the day which He has reserved for His service. Grave theologians, St. Antoninus among others, claim that the circumstance of Sunday adds to sin a new degree of malice grievous enough to make it obligatory to declare it in confession. Be this as it may, we must admit that it is a sinful desecration of the Sunday to employ it for noisy gatherings, bad company, dancing, drunkenness, and debauchery. What! cries St. Chrysostom, Sunday has been given to you to expiate the sins of the week by prayer and penance, and you devote it to the commission of new sins! And of a day which ought to be the holiest of all days you make it the worst of the whole week! Ah! be on your guard; for the Lord says through the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: *They have profaned by numberless crimes the day*

*which I have reserved for my worship; and I threaten to pour out my indignation upon them, and to accomplish my wrath in the desert* (Ezech. xx. 21).

To sum up, Sunday is the day of rest, the day of the Lord. If, therefore, you wish to sanctify this beautiful day, abstain from servile works, and be not afraid to sacrifice material gain for the fulfillment of a holy law as ancient as the world. Be assured that labor on Sunday has never brought happiness to any one. How can you be so foolish as to risk your salvation for some miserable gain? But do not be content merely to rest from servile work; avoid sin and all that might give occasion to it, avoid dissipation, shun bad company and excess of every kind. In one word, may Sunday always be for you a day devoted to rest, to recollection, and to the practice of all virtues. Amen.

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## XXII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Third Commandment (*Concluded*)

In the preceding instruction we said that for the sanctification of Sunday one must, in the first place, abstain from servile works.

But to sanctify the Lord's Day, it is not sufficient to abstain from servile works; we must also perform works of religion. This has been the constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church and the Councils. The purpose of the precept is evidently to perform some good works, otherwise a day of mere rest from work would end only in vice and sin. The works of religion which we must perform on Sunday are attendance at Mass, at the instructions and services of the church, prayer, reading, and other good works.

I. *Attendance at Mass.*— This work of piety is the most essential of all, and the Church strictly obliges us to this, when she commands us: *To hear Mass on Sunday and holy days.* This precept obliges, under pain of mortal sin, all the faithful who have attained the use of reason. Parents must, therefore, send their children to Mass as soon as they are about seven years old, and teach them how to hear Mass, otherwise they render themselves guilty of sin together with their children.

To fulfill this law of the Church, you must: 1st. *Hear an entire Mass.* To willfully miss a *notable* part of the Mass is a grievous sin. That part of the Mass from the beginning to the Gospel inclusive; or that which precedes the Gospel with that which follows the communion of the priest; or the consecration and communion, or either of them, is considered by the theologians as a *notable* part. If a less considerable part is missed, the sin is only venial, but it will be always a sin. A good Christian will make it a duty to arrive before Mass commences, and to leave only after the last Gospel.

2d. A person must be *morally present;* that is, he must be united with the congregation and form only one with the other assistants. He should as much as possible place himself so as to be able to hear or see the priest, because the sight of the ceremonies contributes greatly to excite in us sentiments of fervor, and awakens the attention. In case it is impossible either to see or hear the priest, he must at least be sufficiently near to others assisting, in order that by their signs or movements of piety he can easily understand what takes place on the altar. He must be inside of the church unless the great multitude, or some reason of health, prevent him from entering.

3d. He must assist with *mind and heart;* that is, with attention and respect. Mere corporal assistance would not be sufficient. When the Church commands her children to hear Mass, she prescribes an act of piety by which God is honored; but what act of religion would there be if a person is present merely in body, and if his mind and thoughts are elsewhere; if, instead of thinking only of what takes place on the altar, of the immolation of a God who dies as a victim for our sins, he should think only of the things of this world, of his affairs or amusements?

To be *willfully* distracted during a considerable part of Mass, or even during the consecration or communion of the priest, is, according to the opinion of several theologians, a grievous sin and a failing against the precept. Distractions may come and will come, but they must not be voluntary. When St. Bernard entered the church, he used to stop at the door and say to all worldly and distracting thoughts: "Stay outside, and I will think of you again when I leave the church."

With the attention must be joined *devotion* and *respect.* What act is there in religion more holy, more august, than the sacrifice of the Mass? Miserable creatures, ungrateful and rebellious children as we

are, we are not worthy to assist at Mass. Kneeling on both knees, the hands folded, the eyes cast down, let us occupy ourselves with nothing else than rendering to God our homage and imploring the graces necessary for us; let us adore Him with all the marks of recollection, repentance, and love.

Among the different methods of hearing Mass, the most excellent is, undoubtedly, the meditation on the passion of the Saviour; but as there are few persons capable of doing this, the method generally followed is to read the ordinary of the Mass in a prayer-book, following the priest step by step; or, for those who cannot read, to say the Rosary.

Is it in this manner, my brethren, that you have always heard Mass? Did you ever fail to assist at Mass by your own fault; did you always arrive in time? Did you always assist with becoming attitude and respect? Ah! if you reflect well, what reproaches have you not to make to yourselves, especially in regard to the dispositions of mind and heart. How many, indeed, who, during Mass, occupy themselves only with looking about, who think only of their affairs, their vanities and pleasures! How many there are who are not ashamed to laugh, to talk, to amuse themselves during Mass!

4th. Only an entire Mass, said by the same priest, satisfies the precept, and not two halves of Masses, celebrated by two different priests simultaneously, or one after another.

Nevertheless, strict as is the law of hearing Mass on Sunday, there are reasons which dispense. Physical impossibility, as an illness or an infirmity which keeps us in bed or in the house; moral impossibility, as, for example, the care of a sick person who cannot be left alone; great distance from the church and very bad weather. . . . But we must not deceive ourselves in this regard, by framing excuses which are not serious enough to justify us in absenting ourselves.

5th. Is it the High Mass that we must hear, or are we free to assist at any Mass? Although there is no law which strictly obliges us to attend High Mass, still a good Christian should make it his duty to assist at High Mass in the parish church. Such is the intention of the Church; she has so declared herself in several Councils, and especially in the Council of Trent, which enjoins even bishops to admonish their people to assist at High Mass on Sundays and on the principal feasts, and which asserts that each one is bound to this if he can conveniently do so (Sess. XXIX.). Moreover, the interests of our soul

require this. The Sunday High Mass is offered up for the members of the congregation; the holy days, the fasts of the week are announced at that Mass, the ordinances of the bishop and the banns of matrimony are published, and the sermon is preached by the pastor, who knows better than anybody else the needs of his flock. The pastor and the parishioners form one and the same family, a little flock in the great fold of the Church. Is it not becoming that both pastor and sheep assemble at least on Sunday to edify themselves mutually, to celebrate the praises of the Lord, and to pray for one another? Let us, then, try to assist every Sunday at the Mass of the parish, unless some good reason dispenses us. But in places where there are several Masses in which the publications are made and a sermon given, one may assist at any of these, although one should always prefer that which is celebrated with solemnity, and which is offered for the needs of the parish.

II. Assistance at Mass, my brethren, is the first duty of piety, and the only one which is obligatory, under pain of mortal sin, for the sanctification of Sunday. But there are other good works which should be performed, if circumstances permit, such as attendance at the instructions of the parish in the afternoon, at vespers, prayer, reading, and other good works.

1st. It is generally at High Mass that the sermon is given, and this is one of the reasons why the Church invites you to assist at this Mass. It is also very good to attend the evening instructions in Christian doctrine, where you learn the truths of salvation and the duties of your state of life.

The word of God is like a seed, and when it falls upon good ground it produces an hundred fold. It was by the word of God that the apostles and the disciples of the divine Saviour converted the world, and it is by the word of God that zealous missionaries daily gain to the faith thousands of heretics, pagans, and savages. How many sinners have been awakened from their disorders and brought back to virtue by hearing the word of God! After the Blessed Eucharist, the word of God is the greatest nourishment of the soul. What an abundant rain is for a ground parched by the sun, instruction is for the lukewarm soul. The prophet Daniel preferred it to all the treasures of the world: *The law of Thy mouth is good to me, above the thousands of gold and silver* (Ps. CXVIII. 72). When our Saviour preached, the people forgot to sleep and to eat, and followed Him everywhere

listening to His preaching. How can you better employ your leisure moments on Sunday than by attending the instructions? Would it not be a criminal indifference and contempt if you were to prefer pleasure parties, games, and profane amusements, to the word of God on which your salvation depends?

But it is not sufficient to attend the instructions on Sunday; you must also listen to them with the necessary dispositions. It is not the word of a man or of an angel, but the word of God Himself; it is the word of salvation. When the priest announces it to you it is Jesus Christ Himself who speaks to you through the mouth of the priest. *For Christ we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us* (II. Cor. v. 20). St. Augustine says that to be wanting in respect to the divine word would be very much like trampling under foot the blood of the Saviour. You should deeply engrave in your mind the word of God, and often meditate upon it, according to the example of the Blessed Virgin: *She kept all these words, pondering them in her heart* (Luke II. 19). Not to reflect upon the word of God after hearing it would be to act like those frivolous persons of whom St. James speaks, who, after having looked at themselves in a looking glass, go away, and forget immediately how they looked.

2d. You should also assist at the other services of the Church, particularly at Vespers. Vespers is the evening sacrifice, as Mass is the sacrifice of the morning. It is a public prayer, presided over by the ministers of the Church, in presence of all the assembled people. It is the chanting of the Psalms which David sang before the people of Israel, about three thousand years ago, and which have always been chanted in the Church. The alternate chanting of two choirs represents the chanting of the angelic choirs in heaven. From the earliest time of the Church Vespers have always been solemnly chanted every Sunday, and the truly faithful have always assisted with great piety at this devotion.

Therefore, make it a duty, my brethren, to assist at Vespers. This service is not, indeed, of precept; but how can you better employ the evening of Sunday than by assisting at Vespers, especially as it is generally accompanied with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament? Beware of the idleness of the long hours that follow Mass, lest it lead you to saloons, to frivolous amusements, or into bad company.

3d. *Prayer, Reading, and Other Good Works.*—A Christian who fears God and who has his salvation at heart, will not content himself

with hearing Mass and attending the instructions at Vespers, but he will also sanctify the other hours of the day by pious exercises, such as the way of the cross, the saying of the rosary, pious meditation, the examination of conscience, confession, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament; by some spiritual reading such as the Gospel, the "Imitation of Christ," the "Lives of the Saints," the "Annals of the Propagation of Faith," etc.; finally, by good works, such as the instruction of the ignorant, visits to the sick, etc.

Since Sunday is the Lord's day, it is becoming to devote it entirely to God if possible. Have we not enough with six days of the week for our business and our diversions? Is it not just that among the seven days of the week there should be one exclusively reserved to the service of God, to celebrate the solemnities of our holy religion, and to think seriously of the salvation of our soul? Let us sanctify the Lord's day by absolute suspension of all servile works, by avoiding sin, by attending the services of the Church, by prayer and recollection; and we shall merit to celebrate it eternally in heaven with the angels and saints. Amen.

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## XXIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fourth Commandment

*Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother*

#### DUTIES OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN

The Fourth Commandment defines the duties of parents towards their children and of children towards their parents, of masters towards their servants and of servants towards their masters, and generally of superiors and inferiors towards one another.

I. The first duty of parents towards their children, a duty which embraces at once both body and soul, and which is the source and summary of all others, is love. *Parents must love their children.*

This fundamental obligation is so engraven on man's heart that it would be useless to look for its motives. A parent who did not love his child would be a monster. But parents should love their children in a Christian manner, that is, in God and for God, and they should love God still more than they love their children. Parents who love their children with a truly Christian affection will submit themselves generously to the will of God, when it pleases Him to take their children from them. Parents should not love one child more than the others; for nothing arouses hatred and jealousy in a family more than such preferences. We have a sad example of this in the family of Jacob. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other children, because God had given him this child in his old age. The brethren of Joseph soon remarked this, and they conceived such a hatred against their young brother that they resolved to kill him; and they would certainly have done so, if God, who reserved Joseph for greater things, had not miraculously delivered him from their hands. Nevertheless, how many parents imitate the conduct of Jacob! Because a child is their last born, because it is better formed, because it has a more agreeable exterior, because it has more talents than the others, because it resembles the father or the mother more than the others, all their attentions, all their caresses will be for him. He will always be better dressed, better fed, and be preferred in all things and everywhere. Parents may, indeed, love one of their children more than the others, but it should be only because he is more obedient or more virtuous; but even then this preference should be shown with so much prudence that the other children cannot perceive it.

II. From the love which parents owe to their children flow all the other duties which they have to fulfill towards them. These duties are of two kinds. corporal duties and spiritual duties, those relating to the body and those relating to the soul. As regards the body, parents owe a threefold duty to their children. They must guard and preserve the lives of their children, they must provide for their support, and they must establish their children when they are of age.

1st. *Parents must Guard and Preserve the Lives of Their Children* both before and after birth. Before birth a mother should avoid undue exercise and labor; she should be very careful not to go to excesses in eating and drinking, or fall into fits of passion. If through her own imprudence she should have a miscarriage, she

would be guilty of homicide, according to the opinion of St. Augustine. The husband who should illtreat his wife, or impose excessive labor upon her, would also sin grievously, even if his severity or brutality did not have any serious consequences. A mother would be guilty of a frightful sin, if (God forbid) she were to procure the death of her child, through drugs or any other means.

When the children are born, parents are obliged to see that no accident befalls them. Babies should not be left alone in the house during a long time, lest they injure themselves. Neither should babies be given in charge of children who are not strong enough to carry them, nor careful enough to keep them out of danger. Parents must be very careful about the food given to babies. They should also change the linen whenever necessary, and not imitate those negligent mothers who have no idea of cleanliness, and who allow their children to suffer from vermin or filth. A mother ought to cease nursing her child as soon as she feels herself pregnant, if she can possibly do so. Parents should not have their child with them in their bed. At least until it is a year old a baby should sleep alone, for at so tender an age there would be danger of the child being smothered. Pope Stephen V. considered those to be guilty of homicide whose child was found dead in their bed. Parents ought never to have their grown-up children with them in their own bed, as very serious disorders and sins might be the consequence. For the same reason children of different sexes must not be allowed to sleep together. To allege poverty as an excuse would be insufficient. Parents can never be too careful of the innocence and purity of their children.

2d. *Parents Must Provide for the Support of Their Children.*— They are bound to furnish their children food, clothing, and lodging. Nature itself teaches this, and the very beasts of the field provide for their young till they are able to help themselves. This obligation is incumbent upon them as long as their children are unable to provide for themselves and make their own living, whence it follows: 1. That a Christian mother ought, as much as possible, to nourish her child with her own milk, according to the example of the pious wives of the Old Testament, of Sara, of Rebecca, and the illustrious mother of the Maccabees. A mother who can nurse her child and does not do so is only half a mother, and the nurse becomes a second mother, and takes from the real mother a part of the love and of the gratitude of her child. It may happen that a mother cannot nurse her own child on account of

her feeble constitution. But if a mother should not nurse her own child on account of a false delicacy, or through vanity and pride, St. Gregory teaches that she would be guilty of sin. If a mother is really unable to nurse her own child, she should choose careful and watchful nurses, and especially nurses of a good constitution and good morals, for, as experience teaches, children drink in with the milk the vices or virtues of their nurses.

2. Parents ought never to allow their children to go begging, if there is no real necessity, because this vagabond life accustoms them to idleness, to theft, and to immorality; debases them and robs them of every sentiment of delicacy. If parents are poor, they should work and economize as much as possible in order to procure for themselves and their children the necessary food and clothing. If a family is in destitute circumstances, then members of the parish and especially neighbors, should hasten to assist them. Reason commands this, the law of God ordains it, and alms cannot be better employed. But there are many parents who are poor through their own fault. Families are often in need, on account of idleness, luxury or extravagance. Here it may be an indolent and worldly mother, who spares nothing to satisfy her vanity; there it is a drunken father, who consumes in saloons all that he earns.

3. Parents are guilty of sin if they squander in useless and superfluous expenses the fortune which Providence has given them. Undoubtedly, they may use it for their wants, for charity begins at home. They may also do works of charity according to their means, but they must also think of their children. Thus, Christian parents, if you possess property, try to keep it in good condition for your children. But if the estate is encumbered, if there are lawsuits and contests to maintain, embarrassments to remove, try to arrange all things and to put your affairs in order before you die. Two things that contribute most to the ruin of families, are excessive expenses and bad management. Parents should not wait until the last moment to make their will, for it often happens that at the last moment undue influence is exerted on a sick person, or he may not be in a condition to know what he is doing. A father should divide his property equally among his children as far as possible; he should not favor one more than another, except, perhaps, when one of the children does not merit his share on account of his bad conduct or for some other good reasons.

III. *Parents Should Establish Their Children When They Are of Age.*— To live is not all, says the philosopher, we must also live honorably. Now, to live honorably it is not necessary to be rich, nor to occupy a high position in society; it is sufficient to be an honest man, a good Christian, and to fulfill well the duties of our state of life. We are not all destined for the same kind of life. Each one has his particular vocation. One is called to the married state and another to celibacy; one to the ecclesiastical state or to the religious state, and another to a trade or a profession in the world. There is no man who, in the views of Providence, is not made for some state. Each one is obliged to make use of the necessary means to know his vocation and to follow it faithfully. Thus, if your son appears to be called to the ecclesiastical state, if he has all the required qualities, and if your position permits you to furnish the means for him to enter this career, do not hesitate to do so. If your daughter desires to embrace the religious state, and if you have tested her vocation by a long trial, you would do wrong to oppose her desire. If your son or your daughter wished to marry, if they are of the required age, and if a fitting companion in life is offered, why should you refuse your consent? You must not consult the need which you may still have of your son or of your daughter; you must sacrifice such selfish desires for the good of your children. Besides, as good parties do not offer themselves every day, to what inconveniences and disorders might not your obstinate refusal give rise? Children should also take the advice of their parents and do nothing without their consent; marriage is a serious affair and needs sober reflection. But parents should also act reasonably and not permit themselves to be guided by their whims. They must consult the taste and the choice of their children, and should never attempt to impose an unwilling marriage upon them. Such ill-assorted marriages often breed nothing but discord, and may be a cause of eternal damnation.

Such are the duties which the Fourth Commandment imposes upon parents in regard to the corporal care of their children. Love your children in a Christian manner, and you will find in this love the necessary strength to fulfill all your obligations towards them and to neglect nothing that can contribute to their welfare and happiness. You will watch over their preservation, you will provide for their support, you will settle them in life. Your tender cares for them will merit for you a return of loving tenderness from your children, and will

excite in their hearts sentiments of gratitude. Your family will be happy and blessed, and God will give you the reward promised to good parents. Amen.

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## XXIV. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fourth Commandment (*Cont'd*)

#### ON THE SPIRITUAL DUTIES OF PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN

When a child is born the first care of Christian parents must be to have it baptized. Would it not be an imprudence and a guilty neglect to let so frail a creature, whose life is so uncertain and threatened with so many dangers, be deprived for a long time of the sacrament, which alone can open to it the gates of eternal life? In some dioceses there is a law which obliges parents, under pain of excommunication, to present their child for baptism within eight days after its birth.

Besides this first duty which parents have to fulfill in regard to the souls of their children, there are five others; they must instruct them, watch over them, correct them, give them good example, and pray for them.

I. As soon as the intelligence of the child commences to show itself, the parents must *instruct* it in the first elements of religion. The knowledge of the existence of God and of the principal mysteries of faith, of the immortality of the soul, of a heaven for the good and a hell for the wicked, are the first notions of religion which must be inculcated in the mind of the child with a simplicity that is becoming to such a tender age. The child should be taught to make the sign of the cross, to pronounce the name of Jesus and Mary, to recite the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the acts of faith, hope, and charity, the commandments of God and the Church. As the child advances, the religious instruction must also be more advanced. The Catechism must be learnt, and the child must be taken to the parish instructions and prepared for its first confession, and, later on, for its first communion.

But mere instruction in the truths of religion and the duties of a Christian life is not sufficient. The child must be inspired with a horror for vice and a love for virtue. Nothing has a greater influence on after life than the impressions received in childhood. The Holy Ghost says: *The young man will be in his old age what he has been in his youth* (Prov. xx. 6). *If the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots, you also may do well when you have learned evil* (Jer. xiii. 23). The child may be compared to a young tree which can be bent or strengthened at will, but which, when once full grown, resists all efforts to bend it. Parents must, therefore, implant good principles in their children, and make them contract good habits in their youth. They must imprint in their hearts the fear of God and of His judgments; they must accustom them to obedience, modesty, kindness, charity, justice, and to all Christian virtues; they must, especially, inspire them with the greatest horror for sin.

Parents must also teach their children to be respectful, honest, and well-behaved. Children, in entering the world, will always find therein their superiors, equals, and inferiors. They must be taught how to conduct themselves towards everybody. They must be taught to show charity and indulgence to their inferiors; politeness and kindness to their equals; submission and respect to their superiors. It is especially necessary to impress upon children respect and submission to superiors, for we live in a time in which false ideas of independence are very prevalent, in which each one would like to be his own master and acknowledge no authority.

Parents must also have their children educated according to their fortune and their state of life. They must send them to school, that they may learn those elementary branches of knowledge which are almost indispensable in ordinary life. To neglect this in these days would be all the more inexcusable, since elementary instruction has become so common, and as the greatest facilities are afforded every one to acquire it.

II. Parents must *watch* over their children. There are states in life in which a person can save himself alone, but there are others in which this cannot be done. A single person in the world, a religious in the cloister, have to answer only for themselves; but a father and a mother have to answer also for their children.

Parents must see that their children say their prayers morning and evening; that they assist at Mass, and the other services of the

parish every Sunday, and go often to confession; in a word, that they fulfill the duties of their religion. A father or a mother who would not see that their children go to confession, at least during Easter time, would sin grievously.

They must see that their children do not contract the habit of swearing, lying, singing bad songs, speaking injurious and impure words, or doing wrong to their neighbor. When children are grown up, parents must watch that they do not pass their time in saloons, in frivolous amusements, in going to picnics or on excursions. Finally, they must watch over them, in order that they do not frequent bad company, for this is the greatest danger for young people. There is a well-known proverb which says: "Tell me with whom you go and I will tell you what you are." It is impossible for a young man to keep himself pure and pious if he frequents the company of the wicked, Parents must keep themselves informed of the company kept by their daughters. They should follow them in their reunions, walks, plays, labors, and be inexorable in preventing any intercourse that may appear suspicious. I hardly need to speak of the danger that lies in the indiscriminate gatherings of young men and women. Parents who authorize such company may be said to sacrifice their sons and daughters to the devil. *They sacrifice their sons and daughters to devils* (Ps. cv. 37). Oh! how many parents are there who render themselves guilty in this regard by too much indulgence! How can you believe that these secret interviews, these meetings, these private conversations are without danger? It would be as easy to play with fire without being burned. Watch, watch, I implore you; and whatever it may cost, forbid this kind of company. Sometimes the young people will excuse themselves on the plea that they have marriage in view. In this case you should require that the interviews take place in your presence, and that the affair be settled as soon as possible.

III. *Parents Must Correct Their Children.*—Correction must accompany instruction and watchfulness. In vain would you instruct your children and watch over them, if you did not correct them when necessary. In spite of all your advices and cares, they will always commit faults, and these faults must be corrected: *You parents, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord* (Ephes. vi. 4). Because Heli neglected to rebuke his two sons Ophni and Phinees, or because he rebuked them only weakly, whilst their conduct was scandalous, the wrath of God fell heavily on his family.

His two children perished in battle, the Ark of the Covenant fell into the hands of the enemies, and he himself, on hearing this news, fell from the chair on which he was sitting, and died miserably. It is necessary to correct children, especially when they are young, for when once they are grown up, the bad habits have grown up with them, correction becomes more difficult and often even quite impossible.

Correction should be made prudently and according to the circumstances and the nature of the fault. Sometimes it must be done with kindness, and sometimes with firmness; but never with passion and rudeness. When the fault is slight and committed without malice, but merely through human frailty, then correct with kindness and charity; a simple remark will be often sufficient. If, on the contrary, the fault is serious and committed with wickedness and reflection, join firmness and even severity with kindness; and if the child persists in its fault, and shows itself disobedient and rebellious, be inexorable, and employ punishment if necessary. *He that spareth the rod hateth his son*, says Holy Scripture (Prov. XIII. 24). It is a very false love for children which permits them to follow their own whims and their own wills. When you send your children to school do not get angry because the teachers correct them. The weakness of parents in this respect is a deplorable thing. Some cannot suffer a teacher to inflict the least punishment upon their children. But parents must be prudent and wise in their correction. Let charity and justice reign in everything. Correction made in anger and passion would be ineffective and defeat its very end.

How few parents there are who fulfill the duty of correction in a becoming manner! Some become angry at a child, and scold and ill-treat it for trifling things, and for the slightest failings, but sometimes let the most serious faults pass without a word of remonstrance. Blind parents, what a terrible responsibility you assume before God, and what troubles and bitternesses you are preparing for your old age!

IV. Of all the duties of parents towards their children, the most important is *good example*. If good example benefits everybody, what a great influence must be exerted on children by the good example of a father or a mother! These examples are for children like a sacred authority. The exemplary conduct of parents is for the children the best of all instruction, the most efficacious of all preaching. In pursuit of virtue, *the way of precept is a very long way, the shortest way is the way of example*. If a father and a mother are

zealous in the duty of prayer and confession, the children will be the same; if parents are laborious, economical, just, and charitable, the children will practice the same virtues: "As the father so the son, as the mother so the daughter." If all this is true of good example, it is doubly so of bad example. Who can imagine all the evil influence of the bad example of a father and a mother on the family! St. Augustine says that it is almost a miracle to see virtuous sons when the father is given up to vice. Undoubtedly, children are not excused in imitating the evil which they see done by their parents; but how can one expect that they will not imitate it? How can parents exhort their children to practice virtue and avoid vice, when their own example belies their counsel. Careless and indifferent fathers, how can you tell your children to go to confession, when you do not go yourselves; to assist at the services of the Church, when you do not assist yourselves; to pray in the morning and evening, when you do not do so yourselves? And you, mother of a family, how can you teach your daughter to be humble, reserved, modest, to fly the world, to employ time well, when you yourself are always indolent, employed only in criticizing others, neglecting the cares of your household, pursuing every vanity, and, perhaps even the most dangerous amusements? Without good example all your good advice will be useless. You may send your children to good schools, you may intrust them to wise teachers, recommend them to the care of a wise and good priest; all pious practice will be abandoned and all good instruction forgotten when these children are of age and notice your conduct, and can appreciate and judge your actions. The experience of all time proves this. I will relate to you an incident which, however, is very consoling in the end. A young man had been a model of piety until to the age of seventeen years, when he commenced to relax and soon abandoned the sacraments altogether. His pious mother who had taken much care with his education, became alarmed. She spoke to him privately and asked him the reason of the change in his conduct. The child hesitated . . . but ended by avowing that he had perceived that his father, although he passed for an honest man, never went to confession, and that he wished to do like him. Imagine the consternation of this pious mother. Immediately she sought her husband, and told him what she just heard. The father was touched, and declared that he would no longer delay in fulfilling his duty, and that he would give a good example to his son. He called his son to him, and

together they went to confession. From that time on, the whole family practiced religion in the most examplary manner.

Let parents look upon good example as the most important of their duties. Good example is almost an education in itself.

V. *Parents Must Pray for Their Children.*—All grace comes from God, and man of himself can do nothing. In spite of all the care, and all the watchfulness of parents, it may happen that their children become negligent, and that they even go astray altogether for some time. It is then, especially, that God's help must be asked in prayer. The holy man Job, always afraid that his children might commit some sin, offered sacrifice for them every day. It was through the power of her prayers and tears that St. Monica obtained the conversion of her son Augustine.

Such are the duties which the Fourth Commandment imposes upon father and mother in regard to the souls of their children. Parents will be called on to render an account of the souls of their children; their own salvation may depend in a great measure upon the salvation of their children. The duties of parents towards their children extend to all those who hold their place, such as guardians, grandfathers and grandmothers. Fulfill these duties faithfully, my brethren, and you will have consolation in this world and glorious reward in a happy eternity. Amen.

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## XXV. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fourth Commandment (*Cont'd*)

### Duties of Children Towards Their Parents

All duties in this world are mutual. Parents have grave and extensive duties to fulfill towards their children, but children have important obligations to fulfill towards their parents. By children is meant not only young persons who are still under the care of their parents, or who still live under the paternal roof, but all those whose parents are still living.

The duties of children towards their parents are four in number: love, respect, obedience, and support.

I. *Children Must Love Their Parents.*— It does not need long reasoning to prove that children must love their parents. It is the cry of nature, and the pagans themselves taught that God must be worshiped, and that parents must be honored. The honor and respect due to parents would not be real if they were not founded in love. Religion commands it, since God has repeatedly ordained it: "Honor thy father and thy mother." Gratitude demands it. No child that thinks of all that its parents have suffered for its sake can fail to love them. Good parents will do everything for the sake of their children; they will deprive themselves even of the necessaries of life for their sake, and even expose their lives to save them. A child who would be ungrateful to such good parents would be worse than unthinking animals, who at least show marks of attachment to those from whom they have received life.

The love of children for their parents must not, indeed, surpass their love for God. Children must love their parents in God and for the sake of God, and there is no danger of loving their parents too much if they love God aright. This love must also be shown exteriorly by kind words, pleasant manners, and filial attention and service, bearing with their failings and consoling them in their troubles.

II. *Children Must Respect Their Parents.*— Parents are the representatives of God to their children, and the coöperators with God in their preservation and salvation. They hold the place of God in regard to their children, and God has bequeathed to them His rights and authority: *He that feareth the Lord honoreth his parents* (Eccl. III. 8). This was acknowledged even by the pagans, among whom filial piety and respect was always in honor. One of the most celebrated pagan philosophers said that the parents are as the priest of the Most High, consecrated by nature to that dignity. Tertullian declares that if it is an impiety not to render to God the honor He merits, it is also a kind of sacrilege to fail in the respect due to one's father and mother. Holy Scripture teaches us the manner in which this respect should be paid: *Honor thy father from thy whole heart* (Eccl. VII. 27). *Honor thy father in work and word and all patience* (Eccl. III. 9). Every child owes its parents an exterior and interior respect. *Interior* respect lies in the heart. A child should cherish its parents above all in this life. It makes no difference whether they are old, poor, infirm, rough in manners, and without instruction. It makes no difference whether the children have acquired great fortune or have been raised

to a high position. Although Joseph had become the minister of King Pharaoh, he descended from his chariot and threw himself at the feet of Jacob, his aged father. Jesus Christ, our most perfect model, although He was God, deigned to be subject to Joseph and Mary.

*Exterior* respect consists in words and in actions.

A respectful child always speaks to its parents with humility, kindness, and modesty, and never with rudeness and arrogance. He will never say anything that might shock them or cause them pain. He will never quarrel with them, raise his voice in anger against them, laugh at their remonstrances or advice, or ridicule their defects. Much less will he ever swear at them and curse them. This would be a fearful crime and worthy of the vengeance of heaven : *He that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death* (Matt. xv. 4).

Better still than by words, a good child will show by actions the respect which he has for his parents. His good actions should be the expressions of the sentiments which he has in his heart. A good child always keeps an attitude of modesty and submission in presence of his parents. He will receive their orders and their advice with docility; he will avoid all signs of anger, impatience, and disdain; he will communicate to them his projects; he will take their counsel in important affairs, and will never undertake anything without their consent.

A good child will bear with the defects and failings of his parents. Faith teaches him to bear with the failings of everyone; with how much more reason, therefore, should he patiently support any trials his parents may cause him : *Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life* (Eccl. III. 14).

The Sacred Scriptures are filled with dreadful curses against unnatural children : *The eye that mocketh at his father*, says the Holy Ghost, *and that despiseth the labor of his mother in bearing, let the ravens of the brook pick it out, and the young eagles eat it* (Prov. xxx. 17). *He that curseth his father and mother, his lamp shall be put out in the midst of darkness* (Prov. xx. 20).

How many children have experienced and still experience the effect of these dreadful threats? The race of Cham was forever proscribed and delivered over to an eternal curse because he had dared to laugh at the nakedness of his father who was asleep. Listen to what happened a few years ago. A son had dared to behave himself with extreme violence towards his father in a public place. He even went so far as to threaten him with a pickax which he held in his hand, and would,

perhaps, have given him a mortal blow if persons around had not hindered him. What happened? This unfortunate young man, carried away by anger, left the town. It was about noon time. The firmament was without a cloud, and the weather very calm and serene. Nevertheless, a violent stroke of thunder was heard. Two hours afterwards people came and announced that this young man had been found dead on the road. He had been struck and killed by lightning. This sudden and tragic end was certainly a chastisement of heaven.

God does not, indeed, always punish in so striking a manner. But if God's vengeance is put off, it is only so much the more dreadful when it falls. By a particular design of Providence, children generally imitate the conduct of their parents. If you are respectful towards your father and mother, you may expect that your children will be the same towards you; but if you are not, then tremble lest they treat you as disrespectfully as you now treat your own parents.

Learn, my brethren, to always respect your parents, whatever their age and their failings may be; not only will you avoid thereby the vengeances of heaven, but you will merit the blessings and rewards promised to those who observe the Fourth Commandment: *Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long lived upon the land* (Ex. xx. 12). Holy Scripture furnishes a proof of this in the young Tobias, to whom God gave such a virtuous and such an amiable wife, on account of the cares he had spent upon his aged father. The experience of every day shows how Providence blesses and protects those children who love and respect their parents.

III. Children must obey their parents. The duty of obedience is a result of love and respect. A child cannot love and respect his parents without being submissive and obedient to them. God imposes the obligation in the most expressive manner: *My son, keep the commandments of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother* (Prov. vi. 20). *Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just* (Ephes. vi. 1). And even if there were no such rigorous obligation, a child would still owe obedience to its parents on account of the great advantages which are attached to it. The child is without experience, he does not know the dangers of the passions and of the world. The child is safe if he obeys the commands of his parents, for he is then sure of doing the will of God. Moreover, good order demands obedience. What would a family be where one followed no rule except his own will, where everybody wished to rule and nobody to obey?

Is it only little children and young people who are obliged to obey their parents? No; even those of mature age owe submission to their parents. The relation of children to their parents never changes, no matter how old the children become. Children owe to their parents their life and their education. Where can they find better and wiser and more loving counselors than in their parents? Children do not owe obedience merely to their father and mother, but also to all those who have any authority in the family, to their grandfather, their grandmother, their father-in-law, mother-in-law, uncle or aunt. Children must obey their parents in everything just and reasonable. If it should unfortunately happen that a parent would command something contrary to the law of God, as to steal or to take revenge for an injury, it is evident that children must refuse obedience.

Does a son or daughter owe obedience to parents, when there is question of choosing a state of life, and marriage in particular? A child that fears God will not decide on any state of life, especially in affairs of marriage, without having taken the advice and obtained the consent of his parents. Duty and prudence require this. Peace and union in the family is better preserved, and the experience of parents will come to the aid of the children. But if the parents are plainly unreasonable in this matter, a child is permitted to act against their will if he is convinced of the wisdom of his course.

Children must *obey their parents in God and for God*, because it is God who commands the children through the mouth of their parents. They must obey *promptly*, and without hesitation, for if they were to obey only after having deliberated, hesitated, and reasoned, what merit would there be before God and men? Who does not know of the touching example of young Samuel? Children must obey *willingly*, for if they obey only in murmuring they do not show their parents the respect and affection which they merit, and their enforced obedience would be no better than that of slaves. Let children obey their parents with haste and with perfect docility, even anticipating their desires. What virtue is so precious for children as that of obedience! For them it contains all the other virtues. Let them imitate the admirable examples of the Blessed Virgin, of the child Jesus, who was also subject to Joseph and Mary, although He was their Creator and their God: *And he was subject to them* (Luke II. 51).

IV. Children must support their parents. If charity imposes this duty upon all men towards one another, much more is it binding upon

children in regard to their parents. Children must assist their parents in both their corporal and spiritual needs. If parents are poor, their children are bound to furnish to them what they need for nourishment, clothing and lodging according to their means. If parents fall sick, their children must attend them, or see that they are attended by somebody else, and procure for them the necessary remedies. Any other conduct on the part of children would be ingratitude, inhumanity, and barbarity. A child who has not lost all sentiments of religion and of nature would share his last morsel of bread with his parents. But there are unnatural children who forget themselves so far as to begrudge an old father, an old mother, the little food and support they give them; who quarrel among themselves and refuse to shelter their aged parents. Poor father, poor mother, who took such pains in raising your children, would you have expected that some day they would treat you thus? Parents who are not reduced to this sad condition should remember the advice of the Holy Ghost: "Do not give any power to your son over you, do not give to another the goods which you possess, for fear that you may be obliged to go and beg from him. It is better that your children come and beg from you than to be obliged to wait and see what your children will give you."

The assistance due to parents extends also to their spiritual wants. Children should console their parents in their affliction, and if their parents neglect their religious duties, pious children will remonstrate with them firmly, but with respect. When parents are dangerously ill, the children must see that the priest is called in time, and procure them all the helps of religion. Woe to the children who would hinder them from making restitution in those last moments! After their death, they must not delay the execution of their will for pious works, such as alms or prayers; these are sacred debts which cannot be neglected without sin.

Christian children, fulfill, therefore, well the duties of love, respect, obedience, and support towards your parents, and by obtaining the esteem of all good people you will merit God's blessing in this world and in the other. Amen.

## XXVI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fourth Commandment (*Cont'd*)

I. In the preceding instructions I spoke of the duties which parents have to fulfill towards their children, and children towards their parents, and I remarked that what I said of both must be understood also of grandfathers and grandmothers, and of their grandchildren; of godfathers and godmothers, and of their godchildren; of uncles and aunts, and of their nephews and nieces; finally, of fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, as well as their sons-in-law and daughters-in-law.

Therefore, my brethren, if you desire that religion and good order should reign in your families, all those who are in an inferior condition, such as sons-in-law, nephews, etc., must have for those who are above them the love, respect, and obedience which they owe to their father and their mother, just as the grandparents, fathers-in-law, and mothers-in-law must take care, in the absence of the father and the mother, of all those who are below them in all things relating to both body and soul.

This remark is particularly for sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, for it must be confessed that the duties which the Fourth Commandment imposes are often badly practiced by them, and especially by the young in regard to the old. As soon as a young man and a young woman have entered a house they begin to command as masters, and to take no account of the advice of the older members. All the attention and cares of the young husband are for his wife, and of the young woman for her husband. The old father and mother to whom they owe so much are contradicted, neglected, and perhaps even badly fed and badly clothed.

Young husbands and wives should respect and love their fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law as their own fathers and mothers. Fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law should be patient and full of kindness towards those whom they ought to regard as their own children. Moses always lived in the most perfect accord with Jethro, his father-in-law, and even watched his flocks, through pure obedience. Ruth wished never to separate herself from Noemi, her mother-in-law, and went to glean in the field, in order to nourish her. Oh! what blessings and what a happiness for a family, if these holy examples were imitated!

II. But in a family there are more than superiors and inferiors, there are also equals, there are brothers and sisters. Among the brothers and sisters of a family should exist relations of friendship, of harmony, of regard, and of good example. The young men ought to obey the more aged, and the more aged ought to give example to the younger ones. Is it not a pitiful thing to see a family where there is nothing but disunion, quarrels, and discords among brothers and sisters? On the other hand, what is more beautiful, more amiable, and more edifying than those families where brothers and sisters are all of one heart and one soul; where, among the members of the same body, there is never either trouble or discord; where the joys as well as the sorrows of one are common to the others! *Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* (Ps. xxx. 1.)

Besides the mutual duties of parents and children, the Fourth Commandment requires honor to be paid to all superiors, such as the pastors of the Church, kings, princes, magistrates, old people, and our teachers.

III. The pastors of the Church have three duties towards their parishioners: they must instruct them, give them good example, and pray for them. In their turn the faithful must love their pastors as being their greatest benefactors; honor them on account of their sacred character which elevates them above all human greatness; obey them in everything that regards salvation. Our Saviour Jesus Christ has declared in the most formal manner that the one who hears the priest, hears Him, and that the one who despises the priest, despises Him: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (Luke x. 16). What our Lord said of the priests in general is so much the more true of the pastor, who is charged with the care of your souls.

IV. Kings, princes, and magistrates owe to their people a wise and paternal administration; they must hinder public disorders, give equal justice to all, making no exception of person, protecting strangers as well as relations and friends, the poor as well as the rich. They are the representatives of God upon earth in regard to all that belongs to civil authority, and they must, therefore, give an example of submission to all the divine laws, remembering that the people have always their eyes upon them, and that their conduct can cause the greatest good or the greatest evil, according as it is good or bad, and that the words of Scripture concerning our Lord can be applied to

them: *Behold he is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel* (Luke xx. 34).

On the other hand, subjects owe their rulers submission and respect, proportionate to their dignity. St. Paul says: *There is no power but from God, and to resist authority would be resisting God Himself; therefore, he that resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God* (Rom. xiii. 1–2). Besides, how could society subsist without this subordination, this humble and docile submission to the superiors whom Providence has placed over us?

V. The aged must be honored. *Rise up before the hoary head, and honor the person of the aged man* (Lev. xix. 32). Consider the dreadful chastisement of the forty-two children of the city of Bethel, who were devoured by two bears for having insulted the prophet Eliseus, and calling him baldhead. The age, the experience, the wisdom of old people naturally imposes upon us consideration and respect, and old age has been honored at all times and among all nations. But if old age has a right to the respect of youth, youth has a right to expect good example from the aged. The old man Eliezar preferred all kinds of torments, and death itself, rather than to eat forbidden meat in the presence of young people. So, also, every man advanced in age should say: "Rather die than to give a bad example to the young." Let old people respect themselves, and they will be respected; let young people respect the aged, and they themselves will be respected when they are old.

VI. Let us speak of the mutual duties of teachers and pupils. To educate children and to teach them the first elements of religion and science, is one of the noblest and most sacred functions, but at the same time one of the most laborious and most difficult. How much trouble has not a teacher to take in order to communicate to children and youth, often so lazy, and sometimes so dull, the instruction which is necessary for them, to form them into piety, to correct their failings, to inspire them with good principles, to make them adopt good habits! What zeal, what devotedness, what a patience must they not have to bear up with all the tediousness, to surmount the many obstacles they meet with at every step, to suffer so many contradictions! Only a great love of God and of his fellow-men can make a good teacher. But if they are imbued with these Christian sentiments, and if they possess the qualities necessary for their state, what good do they not do in parishes which are so fortunate as to possess

them! It is a second priesthood, it is a new apostolate which they exercise, and daily experience proves that a youth is soon changed, soon renewed, if he falls into such excellent hands.

But all is mutual in this world, and so if the teachers have such important duties to fulfill towards their scholars, and if they assume such a great responsibility, the scholars on their part must respond to their teachers' care by their docility, their submission, their respect, their application, their gratitude, and thus lighten the heavy burden which their teachers have to carry; they even thus place them in a condition better to fulfill their noble mission.

Parents, on their part, should assist the teachers, and be careful not to excuse the faults of their children, as it so often happens, and thus completely paralyze the good influence of the teacher and destroy all the good which he might do their children.

Let school children remember the duties which religion imposes upon them towards those good Brothers, those good Sisters, those other zealous teachers, to whom they are intrusted, and who take such great care of them. They must love and respect them in all things, subject themselves with an humble docility to all the punishments which they may give, avoid causing them the least pain, and show themselves by their whole conduct thankful for the cares they take for them. Let them not imitate the example of those inattentive and disobedient children who are the despair of teachers and a scandal to the whole class.

VII. The duties of masters towards their servants are of two kinds, duties that regard the body, and duties that regard the soul. The first class can be reduced to three, which are: to treat them with kindness, to care for them in sickness and in health, and to be exact in paying to them their wages. *

1st. *Masters Must Treat Their Servants with Kindness.*—We are no longer in the times of pagan slavery. Christianity has long ago introduced the spirit of charity and fraternity. Servants are, therefore, your brethren and sisters, having the same origin as you, children of God, brethren of Jesus Christ, and destined like you to the celestial inheritance. Therefore, you ought to treat them as such and to have for them all the care which you would desire others should have for you. Therefore, you must not maltreat them or use them roughly,

* This instruction might be divided into two parts, the second of which would begin with the duties of masters toward their servants.

but on the contrary must show them kindness, affection, and try to sweeten their laborious life and make them love their dependence. Religion and humanity both impose this as a duty upon you, and even your own interest invites you to act thus, for the more kindly you treat them, the more they will become attached to you, and they will serve you well and try to please you in everything. It is true, indeed, that servants are sometimes so rebellious and so lazy and so careless, that it is necessary to treat them with vigor and firmness; but, even in this case, be always humane and benevolent. Arm yourselves often with patience, and in rebuking and admonishing them at least try to let them finish their term, before dismissing them.

2d. *Masters Must Take Care of Their Servants in Sickness and in Health.*— If servants behave well and do their work well, if they are not overburdened, and if they receive their pay and proper board and lodging, they cannot complain; but if they fall sick, masters must give them a chance to rest, must furnish them better food, according as their state of health requires; and if the sickness becomes serious, the physician must be called and the necessary remedies procured, if their own poverty is such that they cannot pay for medical attendance. If you should be charitable towards all the unfortunate, with much more reason must you be so towards a servant, who may, perhaps, have ruined his health in your service. The centurion of the Gospel, on seeing his servant ill, asked our Lord to heal him, and Jesus readily worked a miracle to reward this good master. God is often pleased to bless good masters who take care of their servants and treat them as if they were their own children.

3d. *Masters Must Pay Their Servants Fully and Promptly.* Such masters are cruel who delay in paying the wages of their servants; who try to belittle the service rendered and make their servants accept less than they contracted for; who raise objections about lost time and poor service, and pretended damages which their servants have caused. Such injustices cry to heaven for vengeance: *He that taketh away the bread gotten by sweat is like him that killeth his neighbor* (Eccl. xxxiv. 26).

VIII. Masters also owe their servants duties as regard the soul. They owe instruction, watchfulness, correction, and good example.

1st. *Masters Must Instruct Their Servants.*—This duty is all the more strict because servants are often ignorant of the first elements of religion. A very praiseworthy custom that exists in many Christian

families, is that of asking one another the Catechism. The older ones ask the younger ones, the younger ones in their turn ask the older ones, and the results are mutually beneficial and show a desire for instruction which is very agreeable to those who know their Catechism and very useful to those who do not know it.

2d. *Masters Must Watch over Their Servants and Correct Them.*—A good master is not content with instructing his domestics, but he also watches over them, rebukes and corrects them, when necessary. He takes care that they assist at Mass on Sunday, that they say their morning and evening prayers, that they go to confession from time to time, especially on the principal feasts of the year, at Christmas and Easter. It would be a good rule not to keep a servant who does not go to confession at least during Easter time. The master should also watch that his servants do not hold uncharitable, or indecent conversation, or use improper language; he should be careful that they do not roam abroad, stay out too late at night or keep bad company. This duty is common to all masters, but much more imperious for those who have young children, as nothing is more dangerous for children of either sex than the society of a bad servant. He is like a wolf in a sheepfold, or like an itch-stricken sheep among a flock. There is no plague more dreadful for the innocence of children.

3d. *Masters Must Give Their Servants Good Example.*—This duty is most important. Servants readily imitate their masters, as the children imitate their parents. How can a master fitly rebuke a servant for a fault which he commits himself? Or, how can he require his servant to fulfill a duty which he himself does not fulfill? Could not the servant say to his master: "Physician, heal thyself"?

These are the three duties of masters to their servants, but how often are they not forgotten! Many masters are satisfied if their servants are industrious and faithful. But whether the servant leads a bad life or whether he neglects his religious duties, he does not mind. St. Paul says: *If any man has not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he denieth the faith, and is worse than an infidel* (I Tim. v. 8). Need we, then, be astonished that there are so few good servants? "As the master, so the servant." Servants are generally what their masters make them, just as children are what their parents make them.

Oh! masters, what an account shall you have to render one day to the Sovereign Judge, especially if, far from giving your servants good

example, you scandalize them; if, far from correcting and rebuking them, you are the first to lead them into evil by wicked counsels, to abuse the authority which you have over them, in order to render them accomplices or victims of your infamous passions! What a horrible crime! What a frightful responsibility! Ah! if there are any among you who have thus far forgotten their duties, let them tremble, for the judgment which they will have to undergo will be dreadful.

Masters understand well your duties to your servants, love them as brethren and even as children, pray to God to enlighten you on your obligations and especially to give you the courage to fulfill them with a perfect fidelity. Ask pardon of Him for your neglect, and promise to do better in the future. Amen.

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## XXVII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fourth Commandment (*Concluded*)

#### DUTIES OF SERVANTS

In the last instruction I spoke to you of the duties of masters towards their servants, and I showed how numerous and important these duties are. To-day I shall explain to you the duties of servants toward their masters.

The duties of servants to their masters may be reduced to four: respect, obedience, service, and fidelity.

I. *Servants Owe Their Masters Respect.* Masters hold the place of God in regard to their servants, just as parents in regard to their children. St. Paul admonishes servants to regard their masters, not as mere creatures, but as representatives of God upon earth: *Do not serve the eye, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God* (Col. III. 23). The respect which they owe to God is, therefore, that which they owe to their masters, that is, a sincere and profound respect, a respect which excludes every abusive word, and even every thought of contempt or mockery. *Whosoever are servants under the*

*yoke, let them count their masters worthy of all honor* (I. Tim. VI. 1). Consequently, a servant renders himself more or less guilty every time when he fails in this respect in his conduct or in his language. Thus, he sins every time he answers his master with impudence, whenever he uses injurious words against him, or curses him. A servant sins against his master whenever he behaves haughtily or independently toward him, whenever he treats him as an equal or as an inferior, whenever he mocks at his defects or turns him into ridicule. He sins when he will not take correction, when he justifies himself by insults, when he shows indifference or coldness towards his master, instead of that attention and constant willingness which render service so agreeable, and without which it becomes sad and painful.

But a domestic may say: "But my master is not polite, he is so severe, so little respectable in character." This does not excuse a servant. The defects and vices of a master have nothing to do with his quality of master. Certainly a servant may detest the crimes which dishonor his master and the habits which render him vile. But he is, nevertheless, obliged to respect him. Let the servant of a sinful and vicious master pity his sad state and pray for his conversion, and let him be careful not to give his master an occasion of offending God. The more wicked and the more severe the master is, the more kind and respectful, honest and obliging, the servant should be.

II. *Servants Owe Their Masters Obedience.* St. Paul says: *Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh* (Col. III. 22). When a servant engages with a master, he promises to obey in all things just and reasonable. Without submission and obedience the very end of service would be defeated, and a servant would have no right to his wages. The obedience of servants to masters must be prompt, willing, entire, and constant.

1st. Obedience must be *prompt.* "The faithful servant," says St. Bernard, "avoids all delay. His hands are always ready to take up any work, his feet are always ready to move." A servant on receiving an order must not reason, must not deliberate whether he will obey or not. As soon as the command is given he should fulfill it.

2d. Obedience must be *willing.* A good servant will not grumble at orders given, he will not contest them or show any bad humor in fulfilling them. He feels and knows that by obeying his master, he obeys God himself, and thus by doing willingly and joyfully all that is commanded he pleases men and gains merit for heaven.

3d. Obedience must be *entire*. A good servant does not obey only in pleasant and easy things, but also in what is difficult, painful, and repulsive. As long as a master's commands are just and reasonable they must be obeyed, but if a master should overtax the strength of his servant the servant would be justified in refusing to obey, and if the master should forget himself so far as to command something sinful, the servant would be obliged to refuse obedience, else he would become an accomplice in his master's sin.

4th. Obedience must be *constant*. A servant must be ready to obey at any time.

Servants, is it thus that you obey your masters? Do you always obey with docility, with pleasure and punctuality? Ah! how few domestics are there that are guiltless in this respect! How many are there who obey only through force and with grumbling, who perform their work only by halves, and who answer their masters with insolent and injurious words. The condition of servants is, indeed, one of humility and submission, and often of suffering, but God has called them to that state, and their hope of salvation lies in the perfect fulfillment of their duties. Masters have their troubles, also, and it is safer and easier to obey than to command.

III. *Servants Owe Their Masters Service.*—Servants must do all the work imposed upon them, and must do it carefully and zealously. A negligent servant avoids work as much as possible, and does it only with dissatisfaction and disgust. He looks only to his wages, and takes no interest in the property or welfare of his master. St. Paul says: *Servants do not serve your masters to the eye, as it were pleasing men; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart* (Eph. vi. 5–6). A good servant works in the absence of his master just as well as if his master were present; he takes as much care of his master's property as he does of his own; he sees God in the person of his master, and obeys the commands of his master as being the commands of God Himself.

Such is the service which good servants render their masters; a good, loyal, honest, affectionate, and conscientious service, made with a view to please God, the first and best of all masters. Good servants soon win the respect and affection of their masters, they are looked upon as members of the family, and their work, which bad and unfaithful servants look upon as insupportable slavery, becomes in reality a labor of love.

IV. *Servants Owe Their Masters' Fidelity.* This is the most important and the most essential of all the duties of servants, and it is the first thing that a master demands of them. A faithful servant will not steal from his master, he will not waste or damage the property under his care, he will prevent others from damaging the property, and he will keep the family secrets.

1st. Servants must *not steal* from their masters. If stealing is always an injustice, it is surely much more so in a servant to whom a master intrusts his goods. It is an abuse of confidence. A servant who has any of his master's goods in charge is merely the custodian and has no right of property in them, and if he appropriates them to his own use, he must make restitution. To say that the objects stolen are of little value is no excuse, for by repeated thefts these small things amount to much. Neither is a servant excused for appropriating things by saying that his wages are not sufficient, for he gets what he contracted for, and no one has a right to pay himself out of his employer's property.

A servant's time is not his own, it is his master's, and he is bound to devote all this time to the service of his master. A servant, therefore, commits an injustice if he loses his time, if he causes others to do the work for which he is paid and pays for it at the expense of his master, or if he leaves the service of his master without any lawful reason before the expiration of the time contracted for.

2d. Servants must *not waste* the property of their masters. They should take the same care of the property intrusted to them as they would take of their own and should prevent all useless expenses.

3d. Servants must *prevent* others from damaging the property of their masters. They must never become the accomplices of others in defrauding their masters.

4th. Servants must keep the *family secrets*. A servant must have neither eyes nor ears, to see or to hear what is said or done in the house of his master. If quarrels break out between the husband and wife, if a child commits a grievous fault and gives itself up to disorders, when there is a secret illness, if things go wrong in the family, servants must not tell what they know or see to outsiders. Any indiscretion on their part may have serious consequences. Often only one word is needed to destroy the reputation of a family, to destroy the prospects of a son or daughter, or to bring about the failure of some important enterprise.

5th. Servants who fulfill all their duties faithfully, who serve God in serving their masters, will find peace and happiness in their humble condition, will receive the esteem and respect of all good people and merit an eternal reward in heaven. It was by serving his master faithfully that Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, immortalized his name, and many humble and zealous servants, of both sexes, have been inscribed by the Church in the catalogue of the saints.

I have explained the duties of masters to their servants, of parents and children to one another; I have mentioned the relations which ought to exist between brothers and sisters; I have spoken of the duties school children owe to their teachers, and the duties of teachers towards their pupils; I have spoken of the respect due to old age and to the authorities that govern us; and of the duties of a pastor to his flock and of a congregation to its pastor. Redouble your zeal, my brethren, in the fulfillment of your respective duties, mindful of the promise of the Lord to pour down His temporal and eternal blessings on all those who faithfully observe the Fourth Commandment. Amen.

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## XXVIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fifth Commandment

*Thou Shalt Not Kill*

The Fifth Commandment is *Thou shalt not kill.* It forbids us to take away the life of our neighbor. But as there are two kinds of life in us, the life of the body and that of the soul, it follows that there are two kinds of homicide, corporal homicide, which is homicide properly speaking, and spiritual homicide, which is nothing else but scandal. I shall limit myself to-day to speak of the first.

I. All homicide is not forbidden. Thus, the executioner of human justice may, undoubtedly, take away the life of his fellow-man, because God who has the right of life and death over all His creatures, has communicated this power to the temporal authorities to maintain the good order in society: *Wizards, thou shalt not suffer to live* (Ex. xxii. 18). Life may be taken in just wars, but only on battlefields. So, also, in case an assassin were to attack us to take our life and we had

no other means of defense but to take his, we would be justified in committing homicide. But if there were other means to save ourselves, such as flight, it would not be permitted to kill.

Excepting these cases, homicide is absolutely forbidden by both divine and human laws. It is useless to dwell on the enormity of this crime. There exists in the heart of all worthy men, such a sentiment of horror and execration for murder, that they shudder at the sight of a murderer and they look upon him as a monster unworthy to live. It is thus that the name of Cain, the first murderer, has always been cursed and abhorred.

Unfortunately, we live in a country where murder is a frequent occurrence. The newspapers are full of details of murders committed in all parts of the country. This is certainly a deplorable state.

But there is another kind of homicide, namely that committed by unfortunate women who knowingly and through malice, in order to hide their sin and shame, kill the infant which is still in the womb, or immediately after giving birth to it. This is a fearful depravity, and not even the most ferocious animals are guilty of such an act. What a fearful crime is that of a mother — if we can call her by such a tender name — who takes the life of her child and often deprives the soul of the kingdom of heaven! And what must we say of those miserable fathers who, designedly, through avarice, or a mistrust in God's providence, or to escape the burden of raising children, drain their fruitfulness even in the very principle of life, and thus, to the shame of religion and the detriment of society, defeat the very end and purpose of marriage!

The *duel* is another crime against the Fifth Commandment, because it gratifies one's hunger and desire for revenge, and endangers the lives of both combatants. Dueling is a savage practice unworthy of a Christian age, and the Church shows her abhorrence of the crime by excommunicating not only the participants, but also the seconds and all the spectators.

The Fifth Commandment forbids also *suicide* or self-murder. Our life is not ours; it is a deposit intrusted to us by God and we must render an account to Him of what He has given us. A man who goes so far as to take his own life has either lost his faith or his reason. No Christian in full possession of his faculties, and who believes in an avenging God, will dare to take his own life, and cast himself unprepared into the next world.

It is not lawful to take one's own life, neither is it lawful to expose oneself to death, nor to desire death in order to escape the ills and troubles of life. A Christian should know how to resign himself to God's will in all things. Job is an admirable example of patience in suffering, and our Lord in the Garden of Olives is an heroic example of submission to the decrees of Providence. In all trials and adversities, let us bow to the will of God and say, *Thy will be done.* It is well worth suffering the insignificant trials of this short earthly life to merit an eternal weight of glory. Moreover, many of our troubles arise from our own passions, and if we would cure our passions we would spare ourselves many sufferings.

It is lawful to desire death if we wish to be freed from the danger of offending God, or if we desire sooner to enjoy the happiness of heaven. This desire for death is even praiseworthy, because it springs from the love of God. Such was the desire of the holy King David, when he cried out: *Woe to me that my sojourning is prolonged!* (Ps. cxix. 5) and of St. Paul: *I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better* (Phil. i. 23).

II. The Fifth Commandment forbids not only the taking of our own or of another's life, but also all ill-treatment, quarreling, and all evil thoughts and designs against our own or our neighbor's bodily welfare. This is the explanation which Jesus Christ Himself gives us. *You have heard,* He says, *that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the Judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire* (Matt. v. 21).

A person sins, therefore, against the Fifth Commandment, if he insults or strikes his neighbor. The sin varies in guilt with the condition of the person who is offended. To insult or to strike a father, a mother, a priest, or a magistrate would be a much more grievous sin than if it were done to an equal or to an inferior. If by such insults or injuries, the reputation of another has been injured, the guilty party is bound to make reparation. In confession it is not enough to accuse oneself of the harm which we actually did, but also of what we intended to do, but could not or did not do.

How many sins, therefore, do not they commit who are always disputing and quarreling, who do not respect the feelings of their neighbor, who stop at no outrage or infamy in their treatment of others.

How guilty are not those who strike their neighbor, and who are even so brutal as to shed the blood of others! Such bloody quarrels are alike opposed to reason and to Christian sentiments and are unworthy even of savages. "But if I am attacked, I must defend myself." Yet are not polite words and good arguments better defenses than blows? Withdraw from any company where a quarrel is beginning, and if you are unavoidably drawn into a quarrel, control yourself, and if it cannot be helped, rather appeal to the law than return blow for blow.

"But," says another, "here is one who is always talking against me and doing me all the harm he can, and he needs a good sound lesson." No, you have no right to correct your neighbor by quarreling and by blows. Admonish him kindly or appeal to those who are able to prevent his mischief, but keep the peace at all events. Do not imagine that you will attain peace by disturbing the peace of others. Peace is a good which will outweigh any advantage secured by quarreling and disunion. It will more than compensate for all the sufferings that others may cause you. Besides, it is well to examine whether we ourselves are not often the cause of our own troubles, whether by our own provocation we have not brought down upon ourselves the hatred and attacks of others.

III. The Fifth Commandment also forbids hatred, envy, and desire of revenge. Revenge belongs to God alone, who will render to everyone according to his works. *Revenge to me, I will repay, said the Lord* (Rom. xii. 19). Far from being permitted to revenge ourselves, we are, on the contrary, expressly commanded to pardon, according to the example of our *Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust* (Matt. v. 45). This obligation of pardoning is so strict that our Lord teaches us that the judgment which we shall have to undergo some day will depend greatly upon our behavior in this regard. *A judgment without mercy will be rendered against whomsoever will not have shown mercy.* Again our Lord says: *Leave thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift* (Matt. v. 24).

It is not enough to pardon one's enemy, and to be reconciled with him, but we must also love him even though he does not love us, and must wish him as much good as he desires us evil. Indeed, says our Saviour, *if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren*

*only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?* Therefore, He adds: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you* (Matt. v. 46). How can we call ourselves the followers of a God, who pardoned His very executioners, if we do not wish to pardon others? And how could we recite the Lord's Prayer without condemning ourselves, since we pray God to treat us as we treat others? If our neighbor has done us wrong we must pardon him and not only once, but *till seventy times seven times* (Matt. xviii. 22), according to the words of our Saviour; and *if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other, and if a man take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him* (Matt. xviii. 39–40).

*Envy* is also forbidden by the Fifth Commandment. The envious person is afflicted at the happiness of others, and rejoices at their misfortunes. Envy is the crime of the demon, and will draw down the same punishment as overtook Satan and his followers. Try always to preserve charity in your heart and never harbor against your neighbor any sentiments of hatred. Reconcile yourself with your brother when there has been some disagreement, and especially when the wrong is on your side.

The teaching of the Fifth Commandment is peace with our neighbor. Peace is the characteristic of true Christianity. Is there anything in this world more sweet and precious than peace? Is there an evil more fatal than war and discord?

A very common cause of quarrels and discords are lawsuits. Oh! the deplorable mania for lawsuits, from which result so many disputes and hatreds, and the ruin of so many families! Lawsuits are sometimes necessary, indeed, but how often are they only the effect of bad faith and caprice? Can you not find wise and upright men, prudent arbitrators, who are able to settle your difficulties, and save you from going to law, losing your money, your time, and perhaps imperiling your soul. Remember the saying well proved by experience that "a bad settlement is better than a good lawsuit"; and the other words of St. Francis of Sales: "In a thousand pounds of law there is not an ounce of charity," and the words of St. Paul: *The servants of the Lord must not wrangle* (II. Tim. ii. 24). Imitate the Christians of the first centuries, to whom lawsuits and contentions were unknown, and *who had but one heart and one soul* (Acts iv. 32). Love one another, according to the commandment of the Lord, as you love yourselves, doing to others as you wish that others should do to you. Amen.

# XXIX. INSTRUCTION

## On the Fifth Commandment (*Concluded*)

### ON SCANDAL

I. Scandal is a word, an action, or omission which, being evil or appearing to be evil, moves our neighbor to offend God, or at least is capable of doing so.

The intention to give bad example is not necessary to constitute scandal. It is sufficient that the thing done or omitted is of such a nature as to mislead others, whether there is any intention to mislead or not. Scandal may be given even by words or actions, which in themselves are not bad, but which may be misunderstood or misinterpreted by weak souls. In such cases we should refrain from the very appearance of evil, according to the words of St. Paul: *From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves* (Thess. v. 22).

Moreover, scandal is not committed only when a person is actually scandalized, but it is sufficient that what is said or done be of such a nature as would lead him to evil. If a person is strong enough to resist the bad example, so much the better; but the one who gives the bad example is still guilty of scandal.

II. Scandal may be given by words, by actions, or by omissions.

1st. Scandal in words consists in speaking against religion, against its ministers, by blaspheming, cursing, and sinful swearing, and by words against modesty.

2d. Scandal in action is given by misbehavior in church, by working on Sunday, by disputes, anger and quarrels in public, by violating the laws of fasting or abstinence in the presence of others, by indecent familiarities, by debauchery, and by immodesty in dress.

3d. Scandal by omission is given by neglecting to hear mass on Sunday, by neglecting annual confession or Easter communion, by neglecting the education of one's children, by not correcting their faults, and by neglecting to watch over the conduct of persons in one's household.

In short, scandal is committed whenever the commandments of God or of the Church are publicly transgressed either in words, actions, or omissions. There is no sin more common than scandal, but it is

especially a sin to be feared in the case of fathers and mothers, of superiors, and of persons who occupy any high rank in society, and whose influence and example are therefore greater.

III. The sin of scandal varies in guilt according to circumstances. It may often be only a venial sin, but it is sometimes mortal of its very nature, especially in the case of those who willfully and maliciously attempt to lead others into sin. Such persons, for example, are guilty of mortal sin in scandal who, by wicked counsel, try to keep others away from confession and communion, who cause others to lose the faith by carrying on impious discourses or by giving them bad books, who lead young persons into suspicious places, and who corrupt the morals of the young by teaching them things they ought not to know.

The scandal-giver outrages the majesty of God. He seeks to rob God of the souls He has created to His own image and redeemed by His precious blood. God in His mercy has occupied Himself since all eternity with the souls of men. He became man and died upon the cross to redeem mankind, and the scandal-giver robs God of His chosen souls, of His precious conquest, and drags souls into hell. St. Bernard says that scandal-givers are worse than the executioners who crucified Christ. These wicked men simply fulfilled the design of God and unwittingly aided in the salvation of souls by spilling the precious blood of the Saviour, but scandal-givers counteract the effects of Christ's death and seek to destroy the very souls that Jesus saved at the price of so much suffering. The scandal-giver is an Antichrist: *Even now there are become many antichrists* (I. John II. 18); he is a messenger and an instrument of the devil: *You are of your father the devil* (John VIII. 44).

Scandal not only offends God, but it harms those to whom it is given. To rob some one of his worldly goods or of his reputation is, undoubtedly, a great injustice; to take his life is a barbarous cruelty; but to rob him of the life of the soul is a still more revolting crime, because the life of the soul, the life of grace, is infinitely more precious than the life of the body and than all the other goods of this world.

Oh! the deplorable influence of scandal! Fatal torrent which hurries along so many souls into vice and into eternal perdition! The demon is, undoubtedly, a very powerful enemy whom we have to fear. Our passions assail us day by day; but the world with its scandals, with its wicked maxims, with its irreligion, with its impiety, its immorality, increases the power of the devil and of our passions, and acts

as a terrible engine for the destruction of souls. Each one's own experience will teach him the power of scandal. Let each one examine what has been the cause of so many of his sins and he will surely have to answer that it was bad company and the bad example of others. This young man, formerly so pious, so fervent in the practice of his religious duties, can date his fall from bad company or bad books. That young woman, once so pious, so modest, so reserved, is now worldly and shameless, because she was imprudent in the choice of her company, or because she has fallen victim to the wiles of some scandal-giver.

Scandal is, indeed, the principal cause of the ruin of souls. The devil's attacks are easily recognized, and his suggestions are generally as revolting as he himself is. We recognize the movements of our passions, and can be on our guard to repress them.

But scandal is insidious and attractive. Bad example lures us to our ruin, sometimes before we are fully aware of our danger. Scandal is like a raging fire that spreads itself on all sides, and whose ravages increase with time. The evil of bad example keeps always spreading more and more. It multiplies itself and increases with alarming rapidity. A scandal-giver is like a person infected with some contagious disease; he infects others with his sin and causes fearful ruin. He is a wolf in the midst of a flock. Whole communities of good and pious children have been perverted and corrupted by the bad example of one or two wicked boys. Whole societies and congregations of fervent Christians have been ruined by the presence of a few infected members. Nothing is more contagious than bad example. Hell is filled with the harvest of scandal.

Remember that every one in this world is responsible for his actions. A scandal-giver has to answer before the judgment seat of God for the souls of all those whom he has ruined by his bad example. What a fearful responsibility! And how difficult it is to repair the effects of scandal!

When the Emperor Titus was besieging Jerusalem, a soldier threw a burning torch into the temple. Soon a fire broke out with such fury that it was impossible to extinguish it, in spite of the efforts of the Jews and Romans, and the orders of Titus himself who wished to save the building. The temple, one of the wonders of the universe, was, in a short time, only a heap of ashes. This is a striking example of the ravages of scandal. At first it is only a look, only a word, a

jest, a spark thrown into the soul, but a fire breaks out, spreads, and soon causes a great conflagration. The souls of those who have been damned forever by the bad examples of others, cry out for vengeance on the heads of those who have ruined them. They say: "Thou art just, O Lord, and we do not complain of Thy punishments. But wilt Thou be severe only toward us, and wilt Thou not give us for companions of our punishments the authors of our ruin? Soul for soul, life for life, blood for blood! Thou hast promised it, O Lord. Keep Thy word with the wicked, with the authors of our misfortune; it is the only consolation left to us, and we expect it from Thy justice."

The evil caused by scandal is often irreparable. But if no one can hope for salvation until he has repaired the wrong which he has done to his fellow-men, how will those scandalous sinners, those infamous seducers, those emissaries of the devil, expect to obtain pardon and mercy! Scandal is a two-edged sword which destroys both the one who is attacked and the one who attacks. Hence, the dreadful anathema of our Lord: *Woe to the world because of scandals* (Matt. XVIII. 7). *Woe to the one that gives scandal, because it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea* (Matt. XVIII. 6).

But it does not follow that those who have given scandal can never hope for salvation. The treasures of God's mercy are infinite. Those who have given scandal can repair it in some degree by giving good example and by trying to save as many souls to Christ as possible by means of good counsel, exhortations, and most of all by prayer.

Let us carefully avoid giving scandal, my brethren, either in word or deed. We shall have enough to answer for before the judgment seat of God in our own sins and failings without burdening our conscience with the sins of others. Let us give good example in every word and deed of our lives and we shall lead many souls with us to a happy eternity. Amen.

## XXX. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sixth Commandment

*Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery*

The Sixth Commandment forbids impurity, and all that leads to it. In the explanation of the seven capital sins, I spoke of the enormity of this vice. It remains for me to speak of the different ways in which a person can render himself guilty of this sin, the causes that may give rise to it, and the remedies to employ to preserve ourselves from it.

I. The sin of impurity is committed in five ways: By thoughts, desires, looks, words, and actions.

1st. *Impure Actions.*—You cannot expect me, my brethren, to enter into any details. The respect due to the word of God and to the chaste ears that listen to me forbids this. Moreover, those who sin by impurity are generally sufficiently instructed in this matter. It is very difficult for an adult to fall into this vice without knowing that he sins. Even children, who have hardly attained the use of reason, hide themselves when they desire to commit immodesties. It suffices to say that the Sixth Commandment forbids any action, either alone or with others, which would be of a nature to make you ashamed before a father, or a mother, or a confessor. In confession the nature and circumstances of the action must be declared, in order that the confessor may be enabled to appreciate the gravity; and if the action has been committed with others, it must be declared whether they are single or married persons, or persons consecrated to God; whether they are relatives or not, and, also, whether they are of the same sex or of a different sex, for all these circumstances may often change the nature of the sin, and may even make a reserved case.

2d. *Impure Words.*—Those sin by impure words who speak unchaste words, or who listen to them, or who sing, read, or write impure words. This sin is more or less grievous according as the language is more or less obscene, according to the number of persons who hear us, and according as these persons may be more or less easily moved to commit evil. Those sin against impurity who carry on impure conversations, who sing lascivious songs or read immoral books or papers, or who write obscene letters. Obscene conversations and

obscene books are most powerful means of spreading corruption. They teach evil to those who know it not, and kindle the fire of impure passion in the most innocent souls. Of all kinds of scandal, they are the most pernicious and the most abominable. A single impure word, an obscene song, may work untold ravages in innocent souls.

And, nevertheless, what is more common than immodest conversation? Go into any gathering of young people and you may hear words that shock the ears of the pure. Never remain in such dangerous company, but leave it immediately if you can do so; for woe to you if you should listen with pleasure; the poison will soon penetrate into your soul. But you, impure tongues, agents of the devil, how dare you speak such shameful words? You may say: "It is only in fun." But can you joke over the ruin of your own soul and the souls of your neighbors? It is a sad sort of fun that must be paid for by an eternity of despair. You may say: "But even if our words are indecent, our intention is not wicked. Our language may be impure, but our hearts are pure." This is a sad illusion. The mouth speaks only from the abundance of your heart. If you love to speak of shameful things, then also you love the shameful vice, and your heart is far from being pure.

3d. *Impure Looks.* — There are four kinds of looks, but all are not sinful: 1st. When you look at persons of the other sex while speaking to them or accompanying them. These looks are not sinful since they are modest and decent and occasion no bad desires. 2d. Your looks may at times fall upon indecent objects, through inadvertence, and if you turn away as soon as you perceive them, you are not guilty, because consent is necessary before sin is committed. 3d. Looks of curiosity at persons of the other sex to examine their beauty, for the mere pleasure of the beauty. These looks are not generally grievous sins, says St. Chrysostom, but neither are they innocent, on account of the danger to which they may expose one. They may become sinful if indulged in too long. It was a curious and an indiscreet look that led David to commit adultery and homicide, that led the chief of Sichem to outrage Dina, the daughter of Jacob, and drew down such misfortunes upon this city. It was by curious looks that those whom the Scripture calls *children of God*, fell into sin, and their crimes brought on the deluge. St. Augustine tells us that he knew persons of such eminent sanctity, that he would have been less surprised to see an angel fall than these holy persons. And still they fell and were

lost on account of immodest looks. He could not speak of their fall without shedding tears. 4th. Impure looks made with a criminal intention and perverted affection, and deliberate gazing at indecent objects. Such looks are grievous sins, because they give the heart a mortal wound. Holy Scripture gives us an example of such looks in the wretched old men who desired to attack the virtue of the chaste Susanna. The eyes are as the windows through which the devil enters the heart, and kindles the fire of concupiscence.

If we desire to preserve our virtue, let us watch carefully over our eyes; let us imitate the example of the holy man Job who had made a compact with his eyes that they should not look upon a virgin.

And you, Christian women and girls, be careful never to give any occasion of temptation or sin by immodesty or indecency in dress. A certain holy man has declared that those who dress in an indecent manner gain more souls to the devil than persons of bad life. Modesty and simplicity are your most beautiful ornaments, and they should be a reflection of the virtue which reigns in your heart.

4th. *Impure Desires.*—An impure desire is voluntary if it is not accomplished only because the person desiring it cannot do so. It is involuntary, and must be regarded as a mere temptation, if the person has been able to commit the action and has not done it. Voluntary evil desires are criminal in the eyes of God, even though they are not followed by any evil action. God has formally forbidden them in the Ninth Commandment, which says: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.* In the eyes of Him who reads the secrets of the heart, an impure desire is about equal to an impure action, and assumes its whole malice. You abstain, says St. Augustine, from an impure action only because you are afraid to be seen. You have sinned just as if you had done the action. Therefore, in confession, not only bad actions, words, and looks must be confessed, but also all bad desires, with their number and different species.

5th. *Impure Thoughts.*—In this matter many persons have a false conscience. Some see sins where there are none, and others do not see sins where there are really sins. In an impure thought we must distinguish three things: the thought or the representation of a thing contrary to modesty, the pleasure, and the consent given to the thought or to the pleasure.

The thought, however bad it may be in itself, is a sin only when full consent of the will is given. It is no sin to be assailed by bad

thoughts; the greatest saints had them. Neither is it sinful to feel a sensation of pleasure, when some impure thought presents itself to our imagination. Concupiscence is an effect of original sin, and it is in us in spite of ourselves. But it is in our power not to give consent, either to the thought, or to the sensation of pleasure; it is in our power to reject both as soon as we perceive them. If we act thus, far from committing sin, we acquire the merit of resisting temptation. But to allow the mind to dwell upon the impure imagination is sinful, even though no action results, and the sin is mortal if the consent is fully voluntary. *Perverse thoughts separate from God*, says the Holy Ghost (Wis. I. 3); *they are an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. xv. 26). To think of the evil with pleasure is a proof that one loves it, and it opens the way for still greater sins. A bad thought is like a spark fallen into the mind, and there is great danger that it will communicate itself to the heart and result in mortal sin. Alas! how many sins are committed within one year, one month, one day, by those unfortunate persons who are given up to the vice of impurity, who do not watch over themselves, and who take no means to avoid the occasions of sin!

II. These are the different sins againt the Sixth Commandment. It is very easy to render oneself guilty of a mortal sin in the matter of the Sixth Commandment, and the greatest precaution is necessary. Everything under this head is grievous and merits eternal damnation. How many souls are eternally lost on account of this unfortunate vice! Let us examine now the causes that can give rise to it, and the means to take to preserve ourselves against it.

The ordinary causes of impurity are five: idleness, dangerous reading, excess in eating and drinking, dancing, and too great familiarity with persons of the other sex.

1st. *Idleness.* — Idleness is a school of vice: *Idleness hath taught much evil* (Eccl. xxxiii. 29). As long as the mind is occupied, it hardly thinks of anything else except the object that occupies it. But as soon as the mind is inactive, it is filled with thousands of phantoms and shameful thoughts. Idleness is like a stagnant water which conceals the most hideous reptiles. The experience of every day proves this. Hence, if you wish to avoid the vice of impurity, fly idleness. Let the devil find you always occupied. A pious author tells us of a religious who was continually assailed by temptations. His superior employed all kind of means without effect. At length he loaded the tempted man with work of all kinds and charged one of

the oldest hermits to scold him often about the manner he fulfilled his task. Some time afterwards the superior asked the religious whether he was still so much tempted: "Ah! my father," he answered, "how could I have time for temptation since you do not even give me time to breathe?"

2d. *Dangerous Reading.* — Bad books and papers are one of the greatest evils of modern times and one of the most powerful causes of demoralization. They are printed in great number, extensively advertised, sold at very low prices, and they pervade every part of our vast country, even to the remotest corners. They appear under many forms, magazines, journals, reviews, stories, but the poison lurks in them all. It takes a solid virtue to resist the fatal seduction of these bad books, filled with passionate intrigues, with voluptuous and obscene tableaux, with worldly maxims, where vice does not show itself in its hideous nakedness, but conceals itself under the most brilliant colors. A bad book is a certain and inevitable cause of ruin. To read dangerous books under the plea of looking for instruction or merely of passing time is a delusion of the devil. Rousseau, an infidel writer of the last century, said with an astonishing sincerity, in the preface of one of his books, "The New Heloise," that he regarded as lost every young person that would read that book. Did not another writer of the same century snatch from the hands of his daughter a bad book which he himself had written?

3d. *Excess in Eating and Drinking.*— In speaking of the vice of intemperance I said that these excesses are hurtful to the angelic virtue of purity, and we quoted the words of a great saint who declared that he could not believe a drunkard to be chaste.

4th. *Dances.*—Although dancing is not bad in itself, it may easily become so by force of circumstances. Dancing generally takes place among persons of different sex; and then there is danger of indecent gestures, of impure looks, passionate movements, and of discourses which breathe impure pleasure and licentiousness. Moreover, dancing is generally done at night, and we can easily understand how it may become dangerous and hurtful to the virtue of modesty and chastity. Dancing generally takes place in localities where liquor is sold, and this contributes still more to inflame the passions. The music and song which frequently accompany the dance are often voluptuous, arousing the passions and exciting to impurity. It is not astonishing that the Fathers of the Church condemn dancing with such vigor. St. John

Chrysostom said that where persons of both sexes are dancing the devil is in the midst of them. St. Ambrose declares dancing to be the faithful companion of voluptuousness and impurity. It is useless to add that those who coöperate in getting up dances and who lend their houses for that purpose are as guilty as the dancers themselves.

5th. *Undue Familiarity with Persons of Different Sex.*— Inclined toward evil as we all are, can you in good faith persuade yourselves that these familiarities, these private conversations, do not arouse your passions and expose your soul to fall into sin? To be often face to face, to have intimate relations, and not to offend God, would be, says St. Augustine, a greater miracle than to raise a dead man to life. Ah! how many persons lose their innocence because of not being sufficiently careful in this respect! Was it not the company of women that caused David and Solomon to fall? You may say: "Although we visit one another from time to time, we have no bad intention." True enough, but are you sure that bad intentions will not come? Do you not know that what begins in the spirit often ends in the flesh, and that he who loves danger will perish in it? "But," you say, "it is a young man who intends to marry me." Even if there is question of marriage, should you visit each other for years and years to the great scandal of the whole neighborhood? Should these meetings take place in secret, and should you permit those liberties, those familiarities, which as a rule are far from being innocent? Young persons who esteem their honor and virtue above all, and who have their salvation at heart, should mistrust these promises. If interviews are necessary and proper, let them always take place in the presence of your parents or of some other responsible person.

III. It remains for me to indicate the remedies to preserve yourselves from this infamous sin and vice. The first of all is *flight of the occasions.* Without this precaution all the others would be useless. Bad company is the ruin of chastity. "Tell me the company you keep, and I will tell you what you are." I know that sometimes it is very hard to break off with certain associations, but if you value your soul you will not hesitate. *If thy right eye scandalizes thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. And if thy right hand scandalizes thee, cut it off and cast it from thee* (Matt. v. 29–30). One day, a woman of a bad life dared to tempt the virtue of St. Thomas of Aquin, who was then a young man. The saint seized a burning brand from the fireplace and

chased her away and God rewarded his courageous fidelity with the greatest graces.

The second means is *watchfulness*. Watch over your eyes, ears, tongue, and imagination. These are the means by which the devil enters the heart. Dangers are everywhere, and the world is filled with perils to chastity. Chastity is the most precious treasure we can possess, and, to employ the expression of St. Paul, we carry it in very fragile vessels.

The third means is *to repel temptations*, as soon as they arise. Delay in driving away temptation is dangerous. The poison must be rejected immediately, otherwise it will work our ruin. Turn away immediately from evil thoughts, raise your mind to God and sign yourself with the sign of the cross.

The fourth means is *corporal mortification*. Our body is like a fiery horse which needs to be checked through labor and fatigue, through temperance and sobriety. You would become frightened were I to tell you of the mortifications the saints practiced to keep their chastity. St. Benedict, when tempted against purity, rolled himself naked among nettles and thorns. Another saint plunged himself into an icy pond to subdue the fire of concupiscence. St. Martinian, when tempted, put his feet into the fire, and asked himself whether he could suffer the fire of hell. St. Thomas of Aquin made it a rule never to look at the face of a woman.

The fifth means is the thought of *the presence of God*. Like Joseph and Susanna, we should say: "How could I dare to commit such a crime in the presence of Him who is to judge me?" The remembrance of death and of eternity is also very useful. If death should surprise me in this state, what would become of me? Should I expose myself to eternal damnation for a bad thought, for a moment's pleasure, for a passing gratification?

The sixth means is *the frequentation of the sacraments*. It is impossible for a person inclined to this shameful vice to keep himself from evil without this means. Confession and communion are the great sources of grace. *In them we find the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins* (Zach. ix. 17). But this must not be understood of only an annual confession and an Easter communion, as those sometimes think who most of all need to have recourse to these sources of life, but of *frequent* confession and communion. This help is necessary, especially to young persons. How many are lost forever,

because they do not have recourse to confession and holy communion!

The seventh and last means is *a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin* who has such great power before God's throne, and such boundless goodness for her children. This good mother, untainted by the least breath of sin, this spotless lily and cloudless sun, will always protect in a special manner the chaste souls that implore her assistance, and will assist those who have had the misfortune to fall. Invoke her with confidence, and whatever may be your temptations she will not permit you to be lost.

God grant that my words are not useless, but that they may touch your souls and produce the fruit I expect! Employ the means I have pointed out and you will preserve your purity and merit the reward promised to the clean of heart. Amen.

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## XXXI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Seventh Commandment.

*Thou Shalt Not Steal*

The Seventh Commandment forbids us to take or to keep the goods of another unjustly, or to cause damage to him; it commands us to restore what has been unjustly taken, and to repair the damage we have caused. The Seventh Commandment is transgressed: 1st. By taking unjustly what belongs to another; 2d. By not restoring things that have been borrowed, or by not seeking the owner of things that have been found; 3d. By not repairing the damage one has caused to others.

Injustice is not committed only by men little favored with fortune, but we find it among the rich as well as among the poor, among masters as well as among servants and laborers; and one can apply to all the classes of society the words of reproach which the prophet Isaias addressed to the Jews: *All have turned aside into their own way, every one after his own gain, from the first even to the last* (Is. LVI. 11).

The Tenth Commandment forbids us to desire what the Seventh forbids us to do.

The matter which these two commandments contain is extensive. To treat it with all the necessary development will require several instructions. To-day we shall speak of theft in general, of its different species, of the malice of this sin, and of the various pretexts alleged to excuse theft.

I. *To steal* is to take unjustly the property of another. There are several sorts of theft.

1st. *Simple theft* or *larceny*, which consists in stealing secretly, as do those who enter the fields and orchards, taking care not to be seen, to carry off grain or fruits, or who enter houses to take hold of everything that tempts their covetousness, such as money, clothes, furniture, etc.

2d. *Robbery*, or theft by *violence*, which occurs every time one takes away the goods of another in the owner's presence, or by force, as is done by robbers on the public highway.

3d. Theft by *fraud* or *knavery*, which generally takes place in sales or in markets.

4th. Theft by *encroachment*, which is committed when a person changes the boundaries of properties, as of a field, a vineyard, or when one takes possession of a common ground or of public roads, without being formally authorized by law; for it is no more permitted to rob a community than to rob a simple individual.

5th. Finally, *sacrilegious* theft, which consists in taking some sacred thing, as a chalice, even in a place that is not sacred, or something not sacred in a sacred place. Sacrilegious theft is a double sin, and its nature must be declared in confession, if the matter is grave. It is a sin against justice and against religion. To this kind of theft must be referred the usurpation of Church goods, of hospitals, the fraudulent taking away of the revenues of the Church, the product of bequests and pious donations made in favor of a church or for the relief of the souls in purgatory.

II. Theft, in whatever way we may look at it, is always a sin, and even a grievous sin by its very nature; for the prohibition which God gives to us is formal. *Thou shalt not steal*, says the Seventh Commandment. This prohibition is general, and applies to all men, to the poor as well as to the rich, and includes all kinds of injustices. The Seventh Commandment binds certainly under pain of mortal sin, as do all the

divine laws, and St. Paul expresses himself in the clearest manner when he puts theft among the number of sins which exclude from the kingdom of heaven: *Nor the thieves, nor the covetous, shall possess the kingdom of God* (I. Cor. VI. 10).

Unprejudiced reason accepts and confirms the divine law. It condemns as absurd and subversive the communistic doctrines which took rise some years ago and which, prompted by jealousy and the hatred of the poor against the rich, are only calculated to excite man to revolution. Reason tells us that he who has acquired property by his labor, and who has increased it by his economy and wise foresight, is the lawful possessor; that he can dispose of it at will, and that nobody has the right to dispute it or to share it with him, and still less to rob him of it.

The universal and constant practice of all nations is another proof of the lawfulness of private property. Theft has at all times been looked upon as a crime, and thieves have always been branded with public contempt and punished by severe laws. Does the thief even think well of himself, since he always seeks the darkness of the night to execute his projects, and will not suffer any one to call him a thief.

We must not, however, conclude that theft is always a mortal sin. Poison is mortal by its very nature, and still a very small quantity does not cause death. It is with theft as with all other sins. It is only venial when the matter is light. In order that the sin may be mortal, a somewhat considerable guilt is necessary. But the guilt necessary to make a mortal sin is a very difficult point to decide. Theologians do not agree in this matter. Until lately, the most common opinion was that a theft of three dollars from the rich was held to constitute a grievous matter. But money has fallen in value, and theologians are now of the opinion that a greater sum is required. It is the general opinion that a theft of one dollar from the poor, from one to two dollars from a laboring man or mechanic, from two to three dollars from the middling rich class, and five dollars from the rich, constitutes sufficient matter for a mortal sin.

But this rule, if accepted at all, suffers many exceptions. To steal only the value of fifty cents from a very poor person, who has nothing else to keep himself from hunger, or to steal from him even a tool of little value, but which is indispensable for his daily work, would be a sin just as grievous as to steal five, ten, or fifteen dollars from a rich person.

What must we think of those who are in the habit of committing small thefts? The quantity which they steal each time not being large, do they sin only venially, however often the theft may be renewed? To answer this question, we must consider two things: the intention and the quantity.

If in committing small thefts, a person has the intention to stop only when he has taken a large quantity, little by little, it is certain that he sins grievously from the very first small theft which he commits, not on account of the quantity taken each time, but on account of the intention which he has to appropriate a large quantity.

As to those who have no fixed intention to steal a large sum, but who, however, renew their small thefts, and make it habit, whenever the occasion offers itself, they do not sin mortally each time, but if the sum of these small thefts constitutes a considerable quantity, they would be obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to make restitution.

From this we can see how guilty those merchants render themselves, who habitually give false weight, false measure, or those farmers who do not keep their fences in repair and permit their cattle to enter the fields of their neighbor and cause great damage. Oh! how many there are who sin grievously through repeated small thefts! They would be ashamed to steal on the public highway, or to break into a house; but they do not scruple to cheat their neighbors and steal from them day after day, without ever thinking of accusing themselves in confession. They may think that these small thefts amount to nothing, but in the end they do amount to a great deal and, what is worse, they harden the conscience and lead the way to great thefts, even to robbery.

III. A poor man may say: «But must we then die of hunger, whilst so many others do not know what to do with their wealth?» No, you need not die of hunger; but if any one should be reduced to such extreme necessity as knows no law, I would tell him: «My friend, rather than die of hunger take provisions wherever you find them.» But this case of extreme necessity can hardly be found in a country like ours. In every congregation there are so many charitable persons that no one needs to lack the necessaries of life. The poor need only to ask, and they will easily receive what is indispensable for their subsistence. Let them be honest, laborious, economical, let them place their confidence in God, and their efforts will be blessed. God

has a particular tenderness for the poor, and will come to their aid and provide for their wants.

Others may say: "Is compensation not permitted, and if some one does us wrong, can we not pay ourselves?" I do not say, my brethren, that in certain cases this cannot be done, as for example, when you are certain that injustice has been done to you, and you are convinced that it will never be repaired. But it is generally better to employ legal ways to obtain justice. No one ought to be judge in his own cause.

Ill-gotten goods do not generally make a person rich. *My curse shall come to the house of the thief, and it shall be consumed* (Zach. v. 4). And even though you should prosper with your ill-gotten goods, what would be the gain if your soul is lost for all eternity? *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26.) One single reverse of fortune may rob you of all your earthly riches, and you must leave them sooner or later. Only the riches of heaven are eternal, and nothing can rob us of them. *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matt. v. 3); that is those who live detached from the things of this world, and who, far from taking or desiring the property of another, share their property with those who are really poor. In the next instruction I shall speak of the injustices that are commited in contracts as well as in various states of life, and of the necessity and manner of repairing them.

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## XXXII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Seventh Commandment (*Cont'd*)

There are several kinds of contracts. We shall speak in this instruction and in the following only of the most common.

I. *Injustice in sales.* Fraud can be committed in four ways: in the *substance*, in the *quality*, in the *quantity*, and in the *price* of goods.

In the *substance*, as when a person sells one thing for another; for example, a brass watch for a golden watch, or cotton for silk.

In the *quality*, as when a person sells a bad thing for a good thing, a spoiled article for a good one; for example, old cloth for new,

adulterated wine for pure wine, a defective animal as one that has no defects.

As to *defects*, some are visible and others are hidden. If the defects are visible, a seller is not bound to speak of them, at least if the buyer does not formally ask about them, or at least when one has not to do with a man so simple that he can hardly perceive them. In this case it is sufficient to lower the price and to ask only for the real value. Thus if a person sells a horse which is blind or which is on the point of becoming so, he must not set the price as if its eyes were good, but as having lost its sight or being about to lose it. But hidden defects must be mentioned, except when they are of very little importance. Thus if a person sells a horse which is so vicious that he can neither be ridden or hitched, he must mention it; or if he sells an animal which is attacked with some kind of illness, he must mention it, and if he does not do so, he is bound to restore more or less of the price as the defect diminishes the value of the animal.

In the *quantity*, that is, in weight and measure. The wrongs of this kind which are daily committed are incalculable. Suppose a man sells from one hundred to two hundred bushels of wheat a day, and employs a false measure so as to gain about one-tenth per each bushel. On every ten bushels he will therefore gain one bushel. Suppose that a butcher, a baker, cheats one ounce in every pound; it is little in appearance, and, nevertheless, when this man sells forty-eight pounds of meat or bread, he will steal three pounds every day, and consequently nearly eleven hundred pounds per year. Such dealers sin grievously.

In the *price*, if a seller takes a higher price for a thing than it is worth. Merchants are, of course, allowed to make an honest profit, but there must always exist a just and fair proportion between the price and the value of the merchandise. There are two kinds of prices, the legal and the moral price. The legal price is that which is determined by public authority. This price being just, obliges in conscience, and cannot be surpassed without committing sin and without the obligation of making restitution. Moral price is that which is founded upon the judgment of men and which is determined according to the ordinary course of the markets. There are three moral prices: the highest price, the middling price, and the lowest price. In general, except in very rare cases, it is not permitted to sell above the highest price nor to buy below the lowest. But it is very difficult to assign the difference between the highest price and the middling price, and between the

middling price and the lowest price. Several theologians claim that, in ordinary things, what is valued at five may be sold for six as the highest price and bought at four for the lowest, that which is valued at ten can be sold for twelve and bought for eight. But each of these prices may change from one day to another, and they depend upon the greater or smaller number of buyers as well as upon the abundance or scarcity of the merchandise.

How many injustices are not committed in buying and selling! Some imposing on the ignorance or simplicity of a buyer will sell an article at double its value or more; others profiting by the necessity in which a seller finds himself, will force him to give up his merchandise for the half of its selling price. A poor man is unmercifully pursued by a creditor, who threatens to prosecute him if he does not pay immediately. The unfortunate debtor proposes to sell a piece of property or some article of value in order to escape the difficulty, and he is forced to part with it for much less than it is worth. Another one greatly desires an object that belongs to you, and you make him pay twice, or three times its real value. Are these not crying injustices? But if an article is very dear to you, and you are asked to sell it, you may ask more than its ordinary selling price, because your attachment to the article really increases its value in your eyes.

II. *Injustice in Purchases.* — Injustice in purchases is committed: 1st. If a person buys objects which he knows to be stolen. In this case the purchaser becomes an accomplice in the theft; and he is obliged to restore the thing to its real master, or at least the price if the article be already consumed. If a person buys in good faith and afterwards finds that the goods are ill-gotten, he is obliged to restore them to the real proprietor, except the purchase was made in a public market or at a public sale, or from some merchant who deals in such articles, because then the civil law authorizes the buyer to demand from the original proprietor the price that was paid for it.

2d. If a person buys from those who have no power to sell, as from children who have no right over the goods of their parents, or from wives who cannot sell anything without the agreement of their husbands, that is, except their own private property.

3d. If a person who buys or sells for another keeps a portion of the money he has received. Thus, a tailor who offers to buy the material necessary for a suit of clothes he is to make is not permitted to make any profit on the material, because he is supposed to have

undertaken the purchase gratuitously, and solely in view of the work furnished to him. The same can be said of any other person who acts as agent or as commissioner for another; he is obliged to furnish the merchandise at the cost price.

III. *Injustice in Loans.* — One distinguishes two sorts of loans: 1st. Loan for use; 2d. Simple loan.

The loan for use is an agreement by which one gives a thing to somebody, as for instance, an animal or piece of furniture, in order to make use of it for a certain purpose, and during a definite time. In order not to commit any injustice in this contract, the borrower must take care of the thing borrowed as if it were his own, he must make use of it only for the purpose agreed upon, and return it at the appointed time to its owner. If the property borrowed is damaged or destroyed by the fault of the borrower, he is obliged to repair all damage. Many people render themselves guilty in this respect, either by not taking care of the objects which have been loaned to them, or by never returning them.

A *simple loan* is an agreement by which a person borrows things to consume them, such as grain, provisions, money, with the understanding that the borrower shall restore, within a certain time, the same quantity, the same weight, or the same measure. By the effect of such a loan the borrower becomes the proprietor of the thing borrowed.

But here the question presents itself whether the lender can require anything for the use of what he has loaned. If a person has lent a hundred dollars, can he require five or six dollars at the end of the year for the use of the hundred dollars? There are cases where it is permitted to take something above that which has been loaned. A man who, by loaning his money, deprives himself of a real and lawful gain, or who suffers some damage, can, without failing against justice, require the compensation of this gain or loss. For instance, if a person has the intention of increasing the value of his money in some manner, by buying some property or by entering into a certain business, and some one comes and asks him to lend the money, it is evident that the lender can demand interest from the money which he lends, not, indeed, on account of the loan, but on account of the probable gain which he loses, or on account of the damage which the loan causes him. Hence, it is perfectly lawful for those who lend money to require a fixed interest. The civil law has fixed this interest, as a rule, at six per cent.

But, in admitting that it is allowed, in virtue of the civil law, to take six per cent.,— in some States the law allows eight per cent.,— would a person commit sin if he demanded more? Yes, for that would be usury, a species of injustice which has been, at all times, condemned by divine and human laws: *Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor exact of him any increase of fruits* (Lev. xxv. 37). *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing thereby* (Luke vi. 35). The Church, in the holy council of the Lateran, has decided that ecclesiastical burial must be refused to all usurers who die in final impenitence. Moreover, usury has always been severely forbidden by the civil laws. One must not be astonished at this, for usury is the ruin of families, and a plague which devours society. How can a house exist when it has to pay seven, eight, ten, twenty per cent., especially when property yields only three to four per cent.? To require interest beyond what the law allows is, therefore, stealing the property of another, and to steal with so much less excuse, as often those who take it need it a good deal less than those who have to pay it.

And, nevertheless, is not this injustice quite common in the world? One who lends money at eight per cent., without being in any business, steals at least one dollar per hundred and ten dollars per thousand. Some persons lend money only at six per cent., indeed, but as often as they meet their debtor, they impose upon his hospitality, and thus cause him to increase his expense considerably. Other creditors will say to their debtor: "You are a mason, come and do me some work in masonry; you are a carpenter, come and do me some repairing; if not, I shall force you to pay me your debt." The unfortunate debtor, happy to gain some time, hastens to do what is asked. But all this service does not diminish a cent less of his interest. Is it, then, astonishing to see some people becoming rich so quickly, and others, on the contrary, becoming poorer and poorer? I could never finish, my brethren, were I to enter into all the details, but the little I have told you is sufficient, I hope, to make you understand how common usury is, and, consequently, how many persons are in danger of losing, or rather who really lose their souls. For alas! few usurers expiate their iniquities. There is no injustice which is more difficult to repair than usury. Because the victim cannot or does not dare to protest, the usurer always believes himself in security of conscience. Even at death, when upon the representations of the confessor, the dying man

has some intention of making restitution, his children and heirs are often there to hinder it.

My brethren, may God ever preserve you from all injustice! If you have money or other things to lend, lend readily and honorably! It is often an act of charity you do. But limit yourself strictly to the interest that the law allows you. What would it profit you to enrich yourself at the expense of others; it would only make you unfortunate for all eternity. In lending money, as in all other contracts, be just and equitable. May loyalty and good faith preside over all your affairs, and may you always act with an upright and really Christian conscience. Amen.

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## XXXIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Seventh Commandment (*Cont'd*)

I. In the last instruction I have spoken to you of the different injustices which are committed in sales, purchases, and loans, and especially in usurious loans. To-day I shall finish the subject of injustices.

1st. *Promises.*—One understands thereby a contract by which a person freely engages himself to another to do a certain work or to furnish some article. In order that a promise may be obligatory, it must be free and spontaneous, made with full knowledge of the matter, and for a good and possible thing, with the intention of obliging one's self; finally, it must be accepted. I shall not examine here whether one is obliged, in justice, and under pain of sin, to fulfill the promises one has made, when they have not been put down in writing, or made before witnesses. The solution of this question depends upon a number of circumstances which it would be too long to enumerate; but what I can tell you is that when by failing to fulfill your promises, you cause damage to your neighbor, you are bound to repair it. Besides a man of honor will keep his word, and I remind you of the well-known proverb: "An honest man's word is as good as his bond." Thus supposing a person has come to an agreement with some one about the price of something and that the bargain is closed, even though the

thing sold has not been delivered, and although no earnest money was given, the seller is bound to deliver the goods, and the buyer is bound to receive them.

2d. *Donation.*—A present once given does not belong any more to the giver. If a person has given money, clothing, furniture to a relative or friend, and the gift was accepted, the things donated cannot be taken back without injustice.

A donation made of one's property or money to take effect even before one's death is undoubtedly lawful, but it is neither safe nor prudent to do so. Most persons who distribute their property and execute their will before death, live to regret it. If a person desires to do good to a relative or to a friend, let him limit himself to making a will in his favor; and if, later on, he is not satisfied with the conduct of those whom he has favored in his will he is free to change it.

3d. *The Last Will or Testament.*—What injustices are committed in regard to the last will of dying persons! Sometimes it is a husband who, having no children, is not ashamed to employ threats and even ill-treatment in order to force his wife to leave him her goods. Sometimes it is a nephew, a niece, who will do the same thing towards an uncle or aunt. Here there are children who have recourse to the most odious means to prevent their father or their mother from bequeathing anything to the poor or to the Church; there, it will be a brother, a sister, or some other relative who, having already a will in their favor and knowing that the sick person would like to change it, will not leave him out of their sight; will thus hinder the person to whom the dying may have the intention to leave his property from seeing him, and will do all in their power to hinder the notary public from being called in order to make another will. Testaments made under such circumstances are null and void from a Christian point of view, and those who execute them are real robbers of the property of others. Full and entire liberty must be left to the sick and to others in regard to matters of the last will. They have a perfect right to leave their property to whom they please; and to force them through cunning, or other unjust means, to act differently, is to rob them of their goods. It is useless to allege that when the testator is dead and the last will accepted, you are rigorously bound to execute it and to fulfill the pious bequests thereof as well as the others within the appointed time. How shamefully unjust and ungrateful are they who enjoy the inheritance left them by a relative without fulfilling the

pious bequests of the will to the Church and to the poor, and also deprive the soul of the dead of all the consolations which he so fondly expected to enjoy.

4th. *Contracts of Marriage.* — A young man who intends to get married should honestly tell the state of his fortune, and not pretend to be rich if he is not; and if he has debts, he should declare them. Dishonesty and deceit in the arrangements for marriage are often the cause of misery in married life.

5th. *Games.*—Those who commit injustice in games are: 1st. Those who refuse to pay what they have lost. Although the civil law is silent in regard to these debts, everyone is, nevertheless, bound by the natural law to pay debts contracted in this manner, provided that everything was done without fraud and in good faith; 2d. Those who win money and demand payment from minors or from married women who have no property of their own, and who have no power over the family property; 3d. Those who employ fraud or deceit, or who violate the rules of the game.

Games considered as a pastime or amusement are certainly not to be condemned; on the contrary, they are often useful; honesty and good faith must rule in all games, otherwise they become the source of much evil. In order not to make an abuse of games and to avoid all sin, observe the following rules: Play with moderation and calmness and, whatever may be the fortune of the game, never give way to passion and anger. Do not spend too much time at play, especially on Sunday, and do not expose yourselves to lose great sums and to risk your fortune; and, finally, play only as a means of recreation and amusement.

6th. *Lawsuits.*—Those render themselves guilty of injustice in lawsuits who make use of lies, of calumnies, and other unjust means; who gain the favor of judges by presents or promises; who produce false titles, or destroy papers essential to the opposite party. Any one who should gain his lawsuit by any of these unjust means, would be obliged not only to restore what he has wrongfully gained, but also all the costs which he occasioned.

II. After having spoken to you about the principal injustices which are committed in contracts, it remains for me to speak of those which take place in the various states and professions. But I cannot enter into details about all these injustices. I shall content myself with pointing out those which are most generally committed between

husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, and merchants and their customers.

1st. The husband is the master only of the revenues of the dotal goods of his wife; he has no right over her individual property. The wife, on the other hand, commits an injustice against her husband whenever she employs the common property for any other purpose than the support of the family.

2d. Parents render themselves guilty of injustice in regard to their children, whenever they favor one child more than another. However, if one of the children works for his parents, they can certainly repay such child by a special share in their property. Children sin against justice, and are bound to make restitution, if they take something from their parents to which they have no right, or without a reasonably presumed consent.

3d. Masters render themselves guilty of injustice towards their servants when they do not pay them their wages agreed upon, or when they make them wait too long a time, when they overburden them with work, or when they do not furnish them proper food. Servants sin, and are bound to make restitution, if they steal money, provisions, or other things from their master, or if they do not take sufficient care of the goods of their masters; if they lose their time, if they quit work before the time agreed upon and without reason, thus leaving their master in a predicament; if they damage or break the furniture or tools by their carelessness, and if they allow things under their care to perish through want of sufficient care.

I will not pursue this subject any further. Enough has been said so that each one can easily understand his duty, and I leave it to each one to examine his conscience on this subject. Let those who find themselves guilty, abandon their evil course, or restore the goods wrongly acquired.

## XXXIV. INSTRUCTION

### On the Seventh Commandment (*Concluded*)

I. If it is forbidden to take the goods of another unjustly, it is also forbidden to keep them unjustly. Those who render themselves guilty in this regard are: —

1st. Those who have stolen something and who neglect to make restitution. The longer the restitution is deferred, the more grievous the sin becomes.

2d. Those who refuse to pay their debts, or who delay in paying them. If through a long and unjustifiable delay any loss is caused to the creditor, the debtor is bound to repair it. Many deceive themselves on this point. Without speaking of those men devoid of all honor, who are not ashamed to deny their debts, if the creditors cannot prove the existence of the debt, how many there are who, by unnecessary delays and by criminal negligence, cause as much harm to their creditors as if they denied their debts altogether. They have money for everything else, for costly dresses, for drink, for amusements; but when there is a question of paying their just debts, they never have any. Meanwhile their creditors suffer by being deprived of their money; if they had it, they could make use of it for their wants, or they could pay their own debts for which they have to pay high interests, or they could invest it profitably. Such bad debtors, therefore, fail against justice, as well as against honor.

3d. Those who are not faithful in restoring the deposits intrusted to them. A deposit is a sacred thing which the trustee is not permitted to use. Any one who has charge of a deposit, must put it in a secure place and return it at any time he is requested to do so. If it is money that has been intrusted to some one to be employed in good works after the death of the owner, the trustee is bound to take the necessary precautions so that, in case he should die before the owner, the money will be returned.

4th. Those who do not faithfully administer the property of others intrusted to their care. If guardians of minors, for instance, or public officials, who are intrusted with the money of the public, should turn any part of the money or property under their care to their own profit they would commit a great injustice.

Articles that are found must be distinguished as having an owner, or as having no owner.

A treasure hidden away or buried, which has been discovered by mere chance, and to which no one can establish a legal claim, is considered as having no owner. In the eyes of the law the one who discovers a treasure is the owner, if it lies in his own property. But if it lies within the property of another, half belongs to the finder and half to the owner of the property in which the treasure was found. Wild animals are classed among things having no owner. Things found belong to the one who has owned them. *Thou shalt not pass by if thou seest thy brother's ox, or his sheep go astray, but thou shalt bring them back to thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh, or thou know him not, thou shalt bring them to thy house, and they shall be with thee until thy brother seek them. Thou shalt do in like manner with his ass, and with his raiment, and with everything that is thy brother's, which is lost* (Deut. XXII. 1–3). "What thou hast found and dost not return thou hast stolen," says St. Augustine.

If a person has found some lost article he must try to find out the real owner. If the owner comes to claim his property it should be returned to him without requiring from him any other indemnity but that of the expenses incurred in trying to find the owner or for the keeping of the objects in your possession. However, if the owner wishes to show his gratitude, as is often the case, the finder may accept without scruple whatever is offered to him.

But if the owner does not present himself, and if the finder has every reason to believe that he never will present himself, then, according to the teaching of theologians, it is best to employ the thing found, or its value, in good works. If the value is considerable, it would be well to intrust it to some charitable institution to be used for the wants of the poor, with the understanding that it be returned in case the lawful owner claims it. If the value of the thing found is not considerable, and if the finder is poor, he may keep it for himself, but only after having obtained the authorization of his confessor, because no one must be judge in his own cause.

II. Damage caused to the property of others is a very common source of injustice. I shall not enumerate all the kinds of damages that may arise. It will be sufficient to point out some of the most common cases.

Those are guilty of damaging their neighbor's property who, not only steal the fruit, but also injure the trees; who poison private rivers or ponds, in order to catch the fish; who go hunting in private fields;

who cause damage to the flock of their neighbor. All such persons are obliged to repair the damage they have caused.

III. The Seventh Commandment forbids all coöperation in an injustice. To render oneself guilty in this regard, it is not necessary to steal with one's own hands, but it is sufficient to contribute to it in any manner, either through actions, or words, or even by omission, in not hindering the evil when one is bound to do so by his state and duty. Thus, for instance, he who furnishes the ladder to a thief, or who holds it for him so that he may enter a house, or who stands guard while the theft is going on, is guilty of theft, as well as the thief himself.

He who keeps a thief in his house in order to conceal and protect him, or who conceals stolen objects, is an accomplice in the theft, and is bound to make restitution.

If a parent or a master has knowledge that his child or his servant intends to steal the property of others and he does not hinder him, although he can do so, he is an accomplice in the injustice and is obliged to make reparation if the thieves themselves do not do it. A servant charged to watch over other servants must inform his master of the thefts which they commit and of the damages which they cause, and if he fails to do so, he sins; and if the dishonest servants do not repair the injury they have caused, he himself is bound to make restitution.

IV. It remains for me to speak of *restitution*. To obtain pardon for your injustices, they must, of course, be confessed, and penance must be done for them. But in this case confession and penance are of no avail without restitution, or at least without the intention of making restitution. This necessity of restitution is established upon the first principles of the natural law; only a real impossibility can dispense any one from this obligation. Such is the unchangeable rule. St. Augustine says: Sin is pardoned only in so far as the thing stolen is restored. Not to make restitution if one can do so is to continue stealing, and a confessor cannot absolve a person that would refuse to fulfill this duty.

Restitution must be made completely. The stolen property must be returned, or at least its value, if the thing itself cannot be restored. Moreover, the owner must be indemnified for the loss that the absence of his property might have caused him. A thief, if he keeps stolen money for a year or for two years, must return both the money and the

interest on the money for the period he keeps it, and at the ordinary rate of interest. A thief who has stolen a tool from a laborer, thus preventing him from doing his daily work, must give back the tool and make restitution for the wages he has prevented the laborer from earning.

Restitution must be made to the owner of the stolen property, or to his heirs if he be dead. Honest search must be made for them, but if they cannot be found the value of the property stolen should be employed in works of charity. If honest and efficient efforts have not been made to find the real owner or his heirs, and if the thief employs the value of the stolen goods in charity, he is still bound to make a restitution to the real owners if they claim the property. Merchants who have done wrong to the public through false weights or measures must also make restitution to the public by giving as much in surplus weight or measure as they have defrauded by false weights or measures. If, however, their customers are different, they must indemnify their old customers personally, if possible, or else employ the value in works of charity.

Restitution must be made as soon as possible. The longer the restitution is delayed the more guilty the thief becomes and the more difficult it will become to make restitution. Death may strike the thief unexpectedly, and then who can make restitution? Either your injustice is known to your heirs, or not. If it is not known to them, reparation will never be made; and if it is known to them, can any one reasonably hope that they will do it better than yourselves?

But some one may say: "If I make restitution, my children will be ruined." Well, and what of it? Would you damn yourself for the sake of your children? Restitution must be made, even if it cost you your fortune. You may have to begin all over again, but your conscience will be at ease, and you will have the consolation of leaving your children in possession of a property honorably acquired, or if in poverty, it will at least be an honorable poverty.

But another says: "I shall make restitution before I die." But who assures you that death will give you time to make it? Are you so sure that in the last illness, you shall have the time, the will, and the power to do it? A certain rich man who owed his wealth only to numerous injustices, delayed restitution until his death. Finally, he was touched with repentance, and having fallen ill he called a notary public and made his last will in such a manner as to repair the

wrongs he had done. His wife heard of this and, bringing the children to his bedside, said to him: "If you charge us with so many bequests and so many restitutions, what will become of me and these poor children?" The sick man was touched and drew up a new will in which there was no provision made for restitution. A few moments later he was seized with remorse; but it was too late. The death-agony came on and he expired without having repaired any of the injustices he had committed.

All the pretexts which are alleged to dispense oneself from making restitution are futile. The sacrifice must be made and the sooner it is made the better. You will thus regain your peace of conscience and merit the imperishable goods of eternity. Amen.

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## XXXV. INSTRUCTION

### On the Eighth Commandment

*Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness against Thy Neighbor*

The Eighth Commandment forbids all that might injure the honor and reputation of our neighbor, as the Fifth forbids all that injures his person, and the Seventh forbids all that injures him in his temporal goods. It forbids false testimony in a court of justice, lies, equivocations, calumny, detraction, flattery, and rash judgment. I shall speak successively of each of these sins. In this instruction I shall treat of false testimony, of lying, and of equivocation.

I. *False Testimony.*— False testimony is a deposition against the truth, made ordinarily in a court of justice. A person renders himself guilty of this crime, not only if he attests as true what he knows to be false, but, also, if he declares that to be certain which he knows is doubtful, or if by promises, threats, or other means, he induces others to give false testimony, or, finally, on being required in a court of justice to declare what he knows, he does not say all that he knows about the affair in question. He has taken an oath to tell the truth, and he renders himself guilty of perjury if he does not tell the entire truth. No matter whether the accused is a relative, a friend, or a benefactor,

the whole truth must be told to the court. Even then if there were question of a man whom a witness could reasonably fear, he would be bound to tell the whole truth.

I need not insist on the enormity of the sin of false testimony. At one and the same time it attacks truth, charity, justice, and the virtue of religion.

It injures *truth* in a grievous manner, because it tells a lie in the most important circumstances. It wounds *charity*, because it cannot fail to injure the reputation of the one against whom it is directed. It wounds *justice*, because it wrongs others in their temporal goods. It attacks *the virtue of religion*, because it calls upon the God of truth to witness to a lie.

In Holy Scripture God forbids false testimony under pain of the most severe penalties. It is said in the Book of Proverbs: *A lying witness shall not be unpunished* (Prov. xix. 5), and that *a lying witness shall perish* (Prov. xxi. 28). The sacred text furnishes a dreadful example of the vengeance which sometimes overtakes those who commit this crime. The impious Achab had bribed two false witnesses in order to condemn a man to death. The sentence was scarcely executed when Elias was sent by God to announce to Achab that the dogs who had licked the blood of the innocent Naboth, would one day lick his own blood in the same place, and that his whole posterity would perish miserably, as well as Jezebel, his wife, who had advised him to commit the crime. God's threat was literally fulfilled. Under the law of Moses, false witnesses were condemned to suffer the same punishment which would have been decreed against the accused had they been found guilty (Deut. xix. 19). The Church has not shown herself less severe, and in several of her Councils she has declared false witnesses to be excommunicated. The civil law also inflicts the most rigorous chastisements upon false witnesses.

Could I inspire you with too much horror for such a crime? Think of the frightful consequences of perjury. The perjurer not only loses his soul and eternity, but he loses his reputation and his fortune in this life. For is not a false witness despised by all honest men? His crime is a stain on his character, and even his children suffer from his evil reputation. Is it not one of the greatest of insults to be called a perjurer? A perjurer is responsible for all the wrongs which he causes to the accused person by his false testimony. If he causes an innocent man to be condemned to infamous punishments, he must repair the

honor of the injured person, and all the pecuniary damages which may be the consequence of the condemnation; if he causes some one to lose a lawsuit, he must indemnify all the loss which he caused to the injured party. But is it an easy matter to restore the honor and to repair the fortune of a family, especially when there is question of an important lawsuit, or when the accused has been condemned to hard labor or to death. Ah! let him tremble who has had the misfortune to render himself guilty of the fearful crime of perjury.

If you are called upon to give testimony before a judge, be careful, reflect well before speaking; if you know nothing certain, say nothing; if you doubt, say that you doubt; declare what you know to be true, without hesitation, without fear, and without human respect. Since you have sworn to tell the whole truth, you must declare all that you know; the interest of your soul and of your honor demands this.

Those who bribe false witnesses are as guilty as the witnesses themselves and are obliged to repair the damages caused. Those, also, who falsify accounts, or forge signatures, must be ranked among false witnesses.

II. *Lies and Equivocations.*—To lie is to speak against one's convictions with the intention of deceiving. Consequently, one can lie while telling the truth, and one may not tell the truth without really telling a lie. For example, if you say that your father is not at home, and he is really there, but in affirming it you believe that he has gone out, you do not tell a lie. On the other hand, if you say that he has gone out, believing so in good faith, and, nevertheless, he is at home, you do not tell a lie, because you say what you thought.

Equivocations are words which have two meanings and which are employed to deceive others. A father asks his son during Easter time, whether he has gone to confession, and the child answers, yes, meaning he went the year before; this is an equivocation. Equivocation hardly differs from lying, and, consequently, what I say of one may generally be applied to the other.

There are three kinds of lies: jocose, officious, and pernicious lies. A jocose lie is one told in fun or joke; an officious lie is one told to render some service to oneself or to somebody else; and the pernicious lie is one told with the intention of injuring one's neighbor.

Many people wrongly imagine a lie to be a trifle, especially if it is told in fun or to amuse some one. Every lie is a sin, but the guilt may differ according to circumstances. A lie displeases God who is the

truth itself. It is opposed to God as the darkness is opposed to the light. God has given us speech to express our thoughts, and we act against His intentions when we use speech to disguise our thoughts. God forbids lying in the most explicit manner: *Lying lips are an abomination* (Prov. xii. 5); *Be not willing to make any manner of lie* (Eccl. vii. 14). And the sacred writer adds: *Six things there are, which the Lord hateth*, among the number of which is a *lying tongue* (Prov. vi. 16–17).

God has punished liars in the most exemplary manner. Giesi, servant of the prophet Eliseus, was covered with leprosy because he had sought to deceive his master. Ananias and Saphira fell dead at the feet of St. Peter for having lied in regard to the sale of a field, of the price of which they desired to keep a part.

A lie is always a sin, because it is essentially hurtful to society and to the good relations that ought to exist among men. If good faith were absent, if sincerity were only an idle word, and if we had to distrust all we hear, and to be *always* on our guard not to be deceived or cheated, how could society exist? There would be no longer any security in the commerce of life. There would be suspicion and uneasiness everywhere, because everywhere there would be only traps and snares.

Men have always attached a sort of odium to lying; it is regarded as the work of a base soul, and of a character without dignity. As much as we esteem a man of noble sentiments, and who is incapable of deception, so much do we despise one who lies and deceives. We do not believe him even if he tells the truth.

I said that a lie is a sin more or less great according to circumstances. In fact, it often happens that the sin is only venial, for example, when a lie is told only to enliven the conversation, or to render a service to some one. But there are also cases where a lie would be a mortal sin; for instance, if a person conceals grievous sins in confession, or when lies are told by impious persons, to insult religion; when contrary to their own conviction they ridicule its teaching, treat as fables all the truths it teaches, and, finally, when a lie is told in an important matter, to hurt our neighbor, that is, to injure him in his goods or in his honor. In all these circumstances, and in many similar ones, *the mouth that belieth, killeth the soul*, according to the words of the Holy Ghost (Wis. i. 11). And *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. xii. 22).

« But,» says this merchant, « how can I help lying if I cannot sell my goods or satisfy my clients in any other way?» I answer that you do not use the right means to attain your end. A liar, sooner or later, loses all credit and confidence. Uprightness and candor would serve your interests a good deal better, and a reputation for sincerity and honesty would attract customers and increase your business and your profits. But even though lies are sometimes useful to you, should you, for some temporal gain, sacrifice the more important interests of your soul, the interests of your eternity? It is true, the sin of lying is often not mortal, but it is always at least a venial sin; and do you think it is a small evil to be separated from God, to be deprived of graces and to condemn yourselves to the flames of purgatory?

« But,» says a wife, « if I do not sometimes deceive my husband; if I must tell him the whole truth and always, it would be impossible for us to live in peace.» Conduct yourself as you ought, be economical, industrious, reserved in your language, faithful. . . . And, then, in order to live in harmony with your husband, you will not need to tell lies. And, besides, in case you have failed in something, would it not be better to humbly admit your fault to your husband who, if he is reasonable, will be inclined to excuse you and treat you with indulgence?

« But,» says another, « when I lie, it is only to render a service to my neighbor, to my friend, and to spare to him great pains.» In this case St. Augustine answers you that even then if there should be question of saving the life of some one, even when you could not otherwise give baptism to a new-born child of pagan parents, you are not permitted to lie; because a lie is an evil by its very nature, and it is never allowed to do evil that good may result from it.

« But,» says another, « if it is never permitted to lie openly, can I not, at least, use some equivocal words or mental reservations?» I admit that there are cases where the necessity of secrecy, or accepted custom, authorizes this manner of speaking. Thus, for example, if you are asked about a confidential thing about which you cannot say anything, you may answer: I do not know anything about it. If a poor man asks you for alms, and you cannot give him any, you may tell him that you have no money. If a domestic is asked whether his master is at home, and if the master is at home but is busy, or if he does not wish to receive anybody, the domestic may answer: « My master is not at home.» In these circumstances it is evident that there

is no lie, because the terms employed are only a polite manner of dismissing people whom we cannot satisfy. But apart from these few cases authorized by custom, you must avoid mental reservations or equivocations as much as a lie, because, after all, they are nothing else.

My brethren, have a horror for lying, and avoid it most carefully. The saints give you good examples. It is related that St. Andrew Avellinus, having had the misfortune to tell a lie in defending a bad cause, abandoned his career of lawyer and devoted the remainder of his life to exercises of the severest penance. A saintly French priest having been seized by the satellites of the great French Revolution in 1793, a very influential personage obtained his pardon by claiming that the accused person had been ordained priest *during* the revolution, and, consequently, was not subject to the laws which proscribed priests. The fearless confessor of the faith replied: "Ah! my good sir, is the most precious life worthy of being saved by a lie?" And he fearlessly laid his head on the block. If you are so fortunate as not to have contracted the habit of lying, be careful not to fall into a habit so fatal in the eyes of faith, and so repulsive in the eyes of reason, remembering that there is nothing so amiable in the world as uprightness and sincerity. If, however, you have the habit of telling lies, try to correct yourselves whatever it may cost; God's grace and a firm will are sufficient. We are told of a certain merchant, that he imposed upon himself for penance to give to the poor twice the amount of whatever he should gain by lies; and of another, that he resolved to give to them five cents every time he should tell a lie. Both soon corrected themselves of lying. Employ similar means; impose upon yourselves also severe penances, if not in money, at least, in mortification or in prayers; examine your conscience every evening on the subject of lying; accuse yourselves sincerely in your confessions, and be sure that your amendment will be prompt and durable. Amen.

## XXXVI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Eighth Commandment (*Cont'd*)

*On Detraction and Calumny*

I. To CALUMNIATE is to impute faults to another which he has not committed, or to exaggerate his real faults. Detraction is revealing without necessity the faults or defects of one's neighbor. The difference between backbiting or detraction and calumny is that in detraction the evil which is said of another is true, and in calumny it is not true.

One can render himself guilty of the sin of *calumny* in three ways: 1st. By imputing to one's neighbor a fault of which one knows him to be innocent, a theft, for example; or when one attributes to him a vice which he has not, as that of pride, drunkenness, or covetousness.

2d. By augmenting the real faults of one's neighbor. If some one has broken his promise once or twice, and you say that he is a man without honor or character; or if he has committed some small injustice and you make him pass as a professional thief; if he is somewhat free in his talk and you accuse him of lewdness and debauchery—you commit the sin of calumny.

3d. By interpreting in a bad way the good actions of one's neighbor or accusing him of evil intentions. If a person is very charitable, and gives much to the poor, and you say he does this to make a show or perhaps to make secret restitution of evil-gotten goods; if a young man, in order to avoid the occasions of sin, never enters saloons, and you say that he is a miser; if a person is very pious and often goes to the sacraments, and you treat him as a hypocrite—you are guilty of calumny, and of the blackest of calumny, which poisons everything, which misrepresents everything, which changes the purest virtues into detestable vices, which attacks even the intention when it cannot criticize the action.

II. One renders himself guilty of *detraction* in five ways: 1st. By revealing, without necessity, the hidden faults or crimes of one's neighbor. For example, you know that one of your neighbors has committed a theft, that a girl has lost her virginity, and you reveal it to people that do not know anything about it. You know that a certain

person who wishes to get married has a bad character, that he is subject to a loathsome disease . . . and you reveal it without being in any manner obliged to do so — you are guilty of detraction.

You know that one person has spoken evil of another, and you are impudent enough to reveal all this — you are guilty of detraction, but with the difference, that in this case it is more criminal, on account of the deplorable consequences which tale-bearing often causes. Ah! my brethren, if we see so much disunion and strife in families and among neighbors, is not tale-bearing the cause? The mania for tale-bearing is the mark of a base mind. What pleasure can there be in sowing the cockle of discord, and troubling the peace of households, awakening desires of revenge and giving rise to life-long feuds?

2d. By denying the good which is spoken of one's neighbor. If a person is praised in your presence, if his virtues, his good qualities, or his good works are mentioned, you say "Pshaw! he is no better than anybody else; this is all talk, if you knew him as I do" . . . you are guilty of detraction. Wicked and jealous being, why can you not bear to hear your neighbor praised?

3d. When, without denying altogether the good which is said of others, you diminish or weaken the praise, by adding: "But we must not say everything, not all that glitters is gold," etc.

4th. By silence when others are well spoken of. Such an affected and malicious silence is often more harmful than words. While others speak favorably of one of your neighbors, and you who are present and who are held to know all, say nothing, but, on the contrary, by some signs you give the hearers to understand that the praise is undeserved and that, on the contrary, the person in question has very little virtue . . . by this affected silence you may do more harm than by clearly explaining yourselves.

5th. By praising another only weakly or half-heartedly. "He is, indeed, a fine young man," you say, "but" . . . that unhappy "but" causes suspicion of more evil than all the good you may say of him.

Detraction is sometimes indirect, and often takes the air of zeal and piety so as to attack more securely. Pretending to be in horror over the bad conduct of his neighbor, a person tells all the evil possible of him. "What next! What a wicked world we live in! What a scandal! What! you do not know what they say about —? It is a

wonder that the Lord still bears with us! . . .» And thus, while pretending to say nothing, we reveal the gravest disorders and spoil the reputation of worthy neighbors.

Detraction is, perhaps, the most common vice in the world. Nobody's reputation is secure. There is no crime, no matter how grave it may be, which does not sooner or later become known to all. Nothing can be kept secret. Everyone wishes to know of the sins and disorders of everyone else. And what is still worse, if nothing certain is known, then some wicked story is invented. Go into certain companies of idle men and women. There each one is passed in review, without regard either for his position, or for his dignity, or for his character; the priest is no more spared than the rest. Everything must be criticized and censured. There are as many tribunals as persons present, and everyone thinks he has the right to judge all others, with the difference that here it is ordinarily without proofs and without witnesses, and always in the absence of the accused parties who not only could defend themselves, but might also be able to accuse their very accusers of still greater crimes.

III. Detraction is, however, not the less criminal for being so common. Holy Scripture says that *detractors are hateful to God* (Rom. VI. 10), *and that they shall never possess the kingdom of heaven* (James III. 6–8); *and to detract one's neighbor is to destroy the law itself* (IV. 11).

Need we be astonished that the Holy Ghost condemns this sin so energetically, for is there any sin more hateful or more opposed to justice and charity? To rob somebody of his goods is, undoubtedly, a great crime; but to rob one's neighbor of his honor, his reputation, is a still greater crime, because, as Scripture tells us: *A good name is better than riches* (Prov. XXII. 1).

What wrongs, even in temporal matters, do not detraction and calumny often cause, by robbing our neighbor of the confidence of honest people, depriving him of his customers, and causing him to lose work! Add to this all the hatreds, the disputes, the divisions which detraction and calumny cause between parents and neighbors, between people of the same trade and of the same business, for, as St. James says (III. 5), just as it needs only a spark to kindle a great fire, so, also, sometimes only one word is needed to raise implacable hatreds.

What motive, my brethren, can lead you to commit such a detestable sin? Do you find any advantage in blackening your neighbor's

reputation; do you become richer thereby, more happy, more esteemed, after you have thus destroyed the honor of your fellow-men, and caused incalculable damage?

Undoubtedly, it is with detraction as with other vices; there may be, and there often is, lightness of matter, but detraction is a grievous sin by its very nature. The gravity of the sin depends upon the character and position of the person who is detracted, and upon the number of persons who hear the uncharitable conversation. Calumny is a still more grievous sin, because it attacks the neighbor falsely, and because it is more contrary to charity and justice.

IV. There are, however, certain cases where it is permitted to reveal the faults of others, as when the guilty person has been condemned in the court of justice, or if his fault is of public notoriety and the remembrance of it is not effaced by the lapse of time. So, also, when the public good or charity demands this.

Charity sometimes obliges us to reveal the faults of others. If you know that a great scandal or a great disorder is to occur in a parish or community, you should inform the local authorities. If you know that a child behaves badly, you should tell his parents. If you know that a servant is unfaithful, you should inform his master. If you know that a young man entertains suspicious relations, you may, and sometimes must, inform his pastor or his confessor, but always with discretion and prudence. If you, yourself, are unjustly accused, you may without sin reveal the name of the guilty party, if you know it.

V. Those who listen to detraction and calumny commit sin as well as those who speak it. If nobody would listen, nobody would speak. St. Bernard even goes so far as to say that he would not decide who of the two is more guilty, the one who detracts, or the one who listens with pleasure to detraction. What, therefore, must we do when we find ourselves in the presence of detracting tongues? We must, as Holy Scripture says, *Hedge our ears with thorns* (Eccl. xxviii. 28); that is, we must not listen, but should leave the company if possible, or at least show by our cold and serious manner that we do not approve the conversation. There are even circumstances where one must go further and openly reprimand those who carry on such conversations, especially if they are inferiors, children or servants. But, in order not to expose ourselves to the danger of committing sin, the wisest part is to fly all company where detraction reigns and where the reputation of others is attacked.

VI. But it is not enough to confess detraction or calumny, it must also be repaired. It is like the sin of theft: *the sin is not remitted, except the thing is restored.* How many there are who deceive themselves in this regard! And how many confessions are badly made, and how many doubtful conversions on account of detraction and calumny not being repaired! I admit, reparation is often very difficult. You launch the word, it goes from mouth to mouth, and how can you stop its progress? You have applied the torch, the fire has broken out, and how can you extinguish it? But you must regain for your neighbor as far as possible the reputation of which you have robbed him; nothing can dispense you from this duty of justice. Either what you have said is true, or it is not true. If it is true, then, of course, you cannot say that it is not true; for it is never allowed to tell a lie. You must see the persons to whom you have spoken the detraction, and ask them not to mind what you said, because you were imprudent, and beg them not to repeat it to others. Moreover, you must apply yourself to speak favorably of those whom you have detracted, in order to do them as much good by your praise as you might have done them harm by your detraction. But if you have told lies about your neighbor, then there is no doubt about your duty—you must make a prompt retraction, and you must make it to all those who heard the calumny. Do not allow human respect to hinder you; you have committed the sin, you must suffer the consequences. Moreover, if the calumny has injured a person in his temporal goods, you are obliged to repair the damage.

Such difficulties and embarrassments arising out of detraction and calumny, we cannot be too careful in guarding our tongue, as the evil caused by detraction and calumny is often incalculable and irreparable. Make it your rule of conduct never to say of others what you would not like others to say of you, and never to say anything in the absence of any one which you would not dare to say in his presence. Think of your own miseries, of your own faults and vicious habits, and remember the advice of our Saviour, *to cast out the beam that is in your own eye before removing the mote from the eye of your brother* (Matt. VII. 3). If I were asked to offer to some a human motive, I would say: Remember that if you criticize others, others will criticize you; if you blame others, others will blame you. You are generally treated as you treat others. But I prefer to offer you a supernatural motive: Remember the account which you shall have to

render some day to God for so many uncharitable words, and pray to God to grant to you the grace to preserve you forever from this vice, to kindle in your soul the ardent charity which burned within His sacred heart. Amen.

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## XXXVII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Eighth Commandment (*Concluded*)

*On Flattery, Rash Judgment, and Violation of Secrecy*

To complete the Eighth Commandment, there remains for me to speak of flattery, rash judgment, and the violation of secrecy.

I. The sin of *flattery* consists in approving the praises of bad actions of others. The wicked man everywhere finds cowardly flatterers who applaud his vices and who are not ashamed even to excuse his most criminal actions. If one wishes to please a rich and powerful man, or to obtain his protection or an employment through his influence, he excuses his disorders and vices, and praises his indifference in matters of religion and his notorious impiety. There are persons who laugh at the excesses and disorders of libertines and drunkards. To praise a careless Catholic because he does not go to confession, or because he observes neither fast nor abstinence, is to encourage him to continue this life of indifference and impiety. To applaud a young man for his excesses of drinking or debauchery, or a young girl for the excessive vanity in dress or for her suspicious relations, is to authorize and propagate vice; it is doing the work of the devil, and pushing others to their ruin.

Be most careful, my brethren, never to approve in any manner the evil actions of others. On the contrary, show them the pain you feel on account of their crimes and disorders; and if circumstances do not permit you to express your disapprobation in word, then show your displeasure by your cold and serious behavior, and leave the company as soon as you can.

Flattery is not always a grievous sin. The gravity of the sin depends on what is praised and on the danger to which it exposes the

person flattered. But you sin grievously every time you praise some one for a grievous fault which he proposes to commit, or which he has committed already, as theft, perjury, or adultery, because thereby you put him in the evident danger to fall into the crime or to remain in his sin if he has already committed it.

II. *Rash Judgment.* — To judge rashly is to think evil of another and to judge him guilty of sin, without sufficient cause. For example, if something is stolen from you, and without reason, or without the slightest ground of proof, you believe a certain person to be guilty of the theft, you form a rash judgment. If you happen to surprise some one in the act of lying, of drunkenness, or immodesty, and you judge that he is an habitual liar, drunkard, or libertine, you are guilty of rash judgment. Because a person commits a fault once or twice, does it follow from this that he is in the habit of committing it? From the mere appearance or physiognomy of a man, you judge that he is addicted to debauchery, or to avarice, to anger, or to dishonesty — all judgments formed on such insufficient ground are rash.

Do not confound rash judgments with doubts and suspicions. A doubt involves no act of judgment, but a suspicion does. You are guilty of rash suspicion when on slight appearances and without sufficient reasons you are inclined to regard a person as guilty. It is only a venial sin to give one's consent to doubts or rash suspicions, provided that these doubts and suspicions extend only to venial sins; but if they refer to grievous faults, the judgment and suspicion might become also grievous.

As to rash judgment, the sin is only venial if the matter is slight or if the judgment is not fully deliberate; but it is mortal if the matter is grave, if the judgment is perfectly voluntary and deliberate.

Our Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us to fly rash judgments when He says: *Judge not that you may not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned; for with judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? . . . . Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye* (Matt. vii. 1–5).

In fact, what right have we to judge our fellow-men? *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant*, says St. Paul (Rom. xiv. 4). Whether he falls or whether he remains firm, does not regard us.

Who has established us judges of his conduct? To God alone belongs the right to judge men, because He alone can know the secrets of their hearts and see their intentions.

Hence, we must never judge anybody. Even when we cannot excuse the action, charity requires us to excuse the motives if possible. Perhaps the accused person was in good faith, but acted without reflection. Let us always start with the principle that we must do to others as we wish others to do to us.

The wise precautions which a father or a mother, a master or a mistress, may take in regard to their children or their domestics to hinder them from doing evil, must not be reckoned as rash judgments. They are obliged to watch with solicitude over the conduct of those under their charge, to prevent disorders, and they must foresee the faults which might be committed, in order to prevent them. Far from committing sin, it is a duty which they fulfill, and the judgments which they pass may at times be false, but they are not rash or unjust.

III. *Violation of Secrecy.*—A secret is something known only by one person, or by a small number of persons. There are two kinds of secrets: the natural secret and the conventional secret. Natural secrets are imposed by the law of nature, and independent of all previous agreement; conventional secrets are based upon an explicit or tacit agreement; explicit when one has formally promised to keep silence about the secret intrusted; tacit, when the silence is required by the circumstances, and by the very nature of the thing intrusted. Thus, an attorney-at-law, a notary public, a confessor, a physician, can not tell anything of what has been communicated to them by those who consult them.

The violation of a secret is sinful on account of the anxiety which it causes to the person interested, or on account of the damage done to his honor and goods, or, finally, on account of the troubles and quarrels to which it may give rise. For example, if you have served as a witness to a will which is made in secret, and you make known its dispositions, and thus bring upon the testator troubles and vexations, and the reproach and hatred of those who expected to be the heirs, you commit a grievous sin. If a wife communicates to you the troubles her husband causes her, and if you reveal these secrets to a friend or a neighbor, and the reports spread and reach the ears of the persons interested, are you not responsible for all the evil consequences? If a friend tells you of certain projects which he has of attempting a

certain speculation, or of making a certain purchase, and you divulge these projects, thus giving a chance to others to anticipate him, and execute the plans for their own profit; or if he confides to you that he has lost a receipt, and you publish it, and dishonest dealers force him to pay a second time, is it not evident that you are obliged to repair all the damages you caused by such imprudent words?

What we say of these secrets may also be applied to letters. Parents, indeed, have the right to open and read the letters addressed to their children; the directors of schools can control the correspondence of their scholars. Prudence requires this, and, far from committing sin, they only exercise a necessary watchfulness and fulfill a rigorous duty. But aside from these exceptions, nobody has the right to open a letter which is not addressed to him, and it is a grievous sin to do so, at least, if, according to the circumstances, one cannot reasonably judge that the letter contains nothing of importance. The sin becomes still greater if one knows beforehand that the letter contains important matter, and if one has the intention to do harm with the knowledge thus acquired. Neither is it permitted to read unsealed letters which fall by chance into our hands, or to pick up and unite the different parts of a letter that has been torn in order to destroy its contents. If you have had the indiscretion to read another's letter, you must keep it secret, at least if there is no ground to presume that the letter has been thrown aside as of no consequence.

Be discreet, my brethren, watch over your words in order never to divulge the secrets that have been intrusted to you. A faithful friend is careful to keep hidden what friendship has confided to him, only knaves reveals secrets. This is even the language of Holy Scripture: *He that walketh deceitfully, revealeth secrets; but he that is faithful concealeth the thing committed to him by his friend* (Prov. xi. 13). Never confide your secrets to any one except when there is a real necessity for it; and in that case, select for your confidant a sure man, one of acknowledged virtue and piety. How many people are there who cannot keep any secret, and reveal it at the first occasion! How many imprudent friends, or those having only the appearance of friendship, who, after the least strife, will not hesitate to betray you!

I shall not speak of the last two Commandments which forbid evil desires: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife. Thou shalt not*

*covet thy neighbor's goods*. We have explained them sufficiently under the head of the Sixth and Seventh Commandments.

General Conclusion.—We have seen, my brethren, the law of God and the immense extent of the duties which it imposes upon us. This is the law which God gave to Moses upon Mount Sinai nearly four thousand years ago, and which is nothing else but the expression of the natural law which had been engraved in the heart of man from the beginning of the world. This is that law so wonderful, so precise, and so grand, which neither the series of ages, nor differences of climate, nor various characters of nations, nor revolutions, have ever changed or can change.

There remains for me only to encourage you to practice it well. You *can* do this, because the Lord who is our Father, and the best of fathers, never commands anything impossible to you. And you *ought* to practice it, because He who imposes it upon you is your sovereign Lord and Master, and because on the observance or the non-observance of this law depends your eternal salvation. Observe it faithfully and you shall be happy, eternally happy; neglect it and you shall be unhappy for all eternity.

But how ought you to observe it? First, with *love*, and not with pain and repugnance. The God whom you serve is a God of love, and no other worship can be agreeable to Him except the worship that comes from the heart. Second, you must observe it *entirely*. To violate this law in one single point would be to violate it in all parts: *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all* (James II. 10). Therefore, it is not sufficient, as many people maintain, to be an honest man, to wrong nobody; you must, moreover, practice chastity, according to your state of life; you must pray, you must keep the Sunday holy; in a word, you must observe the whole law. This is the answer of our Lord and Saviour to the young man who asked Him what he had to do to be saved: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments* (Matt. XIX. 17). Finally, you must observe it *constantly* and to the very end; for only the one who shall persevere to the end shall be saved (Matt. XXIV. 13).

How happy would I esteem myself, my brethren, to have been able, in the course of these instructions, to enlighten your minds sufficiently on the duties of this holy and adorable law, and to dispose your hearts to observe them always faithfully. May God give you this grace! Amen.

## XXXVIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Commandments of the Church

I. Before entering into the explanation of the Commandments of the Church I shall briefly show that the Church has really the power to impose laws upon us. Our Lord Jesus Christ, her divine founder, formally invested her with this power, when He said to His apostles and, in their person, to all the bishops, their successors: *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven.* The power of binding consciences evidently implies the power of imposing laws. Our Saviour expressed Himself not less clearly and energetically when He also said to His apostles: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me* (Luke x. 16); or again: *He who will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican* (Matt. xviii. 17).

In every well-organized society must there not be an authority which has the power to make laws and execute them? And if no authority did exist, would not society soon fall into anarchy? The Church is an immense society, spread all over the world; she begets us to faith, in regenerating us in the waters of baptism; she teaches us the doctrine of the Saviour, its morals, its dogmas, and its mysteries; she nourishes us with the eucharistic bread and with all the graces which the Sacraments confer upon us; she forms a vast body united in the oneness of faith, in the use of the same sacraments, and in the observance of the same laws. Therefore, there must be in the Church an authority which has the power to make us observe the divine laws of which she is the depository, to direct consciences, to establish and preserve good order, and which, consequently, can make laws to which all the faithful are obliged to submit.

From the very beginning down to the present day, the Church has never ceased to make use of this supreme power which Jesus Christ gave her. She has always made regulations according to the need of circumstances, fixed the liturgy, established laws concerning morals and discipline, imposed upon sinners severe penances, and even cut them off from her communion if they proved incorrigible.

It is, therefore, an incontestable fact, that the Church has received the power to impose laws upon her children, and that these laws bind

under pain of mortal sin, as do the laws of God Himself: *He who despises you, despises me;* and, as St. Cyprian says: *He cannot have God for his father, who does not acknowledge the Church as his mother.*

II. The Commandments of the Church are:—

1st. To hear Mass on Sunday and holy days.

2d. To fast and to abstain on the days commanded.

3d. To go to confession at least once a year.

4th. To receive the Holy Eucharist during Easter time.

5th. To contribute to the support of our pastors.

6th. To observe the regulations of the Church concerning matrimony.

The First Commandment obliges us to sanctify the Sundays and holy days. The holy days in our country are: The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Christmas, Circumcision of our Lord, Ascension, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and All Saints Day. It is not my intention to inquire into the origin or the object of these holy days, and as the sanctification of these holy days is absolutely the same as that of Sunday, I need not explain it any further.

III. The Second Commandment of the Church is: *To fast and to abstain on the days commanded.*

This Commandment obliges us to fast during Lent, on the Ember days and on the vigils or eves of certain holy days. Lent includes the forty days, Sundays excepted, which precede the feast of Easter. This is the principal fast of Christians, and dates from the very beginning of the Church. The Fathers of the Church teach us that it was instituted by the Apostles themselves. The reason the Church instituted it was to imitate the fast of forty days of Jesus Christ in the desert, to expiate our sins by penance, and to prepare us for the spiritual resurrection of Easter Sunday.

Ember days are the three days of fast which the Church prescribes at the commencement of each season of the year. St. Leo teaches that, like Lent, they are of apostolic tradition. They remind us that there is no time of the year which we ought not to consecrate to the Lord by good works, and give us an occasion to pray for the preservation of the fruits of the earth, and, finally, to beg God for His blessing upon the ordination of the ecclesiastics which takes place during the Ember days.

Vigils, or eves, are days which precede the principal feasts of the year. They are so called because in the first centuries of the Church

the vigils were spent in praising God, chanting Psalms, and reading the Holy Scripture. The vigils are no longer so strictly kept, but the Church commands us to fast, in order to prepare ourselves for the solemnity of the day following. The vigils on which fast is of precept are those of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Assumption, and All Saints Day.

The Second Commandment of the Church also obliges us to abstain from flesh-meat on Fridays, on certain days of Lent, on the Ember days, and on the vigils of certain feasts. All these regulations date from apostolic times and oblige under mortal sin.

Every person who has attained the use of reason is obliged to abstain from flesh-meat on the days commanded unless legitimate reasons dispense from it, and parents would sin grievously if, on prohibited days, they should offer flesh-meat to their children, after they have reached the age of seven years.

IV. Abstinence from certain foods has always been practiced, and dates back to the origin of the world. At all times men have been condemned to abstain from a certain kind of nourishment. In the earthly paradise, our first parents were forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Under the law of Moses the Jews were forbidden to eat the flesh of certain animals termed unclean. In the beginning of Christianity, the apostles assembled in the Council of Jerusalem commanded the faithful to abstain from blood and from animals suffocated, and we see in the Gospel that our Saviour publicly praised St. John the Baptist for having lived on grasshoppers and wild honey.

The custom of abstaining from certain foods through mortification, is therefore not new, and the Church, in imposing this obligation upon us, has followed the examples of which we read in Holy Scripture.

It would be a great error to believe that the custom of eating flesh-meat is absolutely necessary for man, and that the privation of this nourishment is detrimental to health. Up to the time of the Deluge, that is, during sixteen centuries, mankind abstained from flesh-meat. Although the use of meat is permitted and has spread everywhere, there are, nevertheless, many people in all parts of the world, especially in warm climates, who do not eat meat. In Europe there are many who work hard, and who eat flesh-meat very seldom, hardly once or twice a week, but still they are strong, robust, and vigorous.

Abstinence, such as the Church prescribes, far from injuring the health, can be only advantageous to it. A simple and vegetable diet purifies the blood and preserves from those acute illnesses which are only too often occasioned by a food that is too nourishing and too heating. The Holy Ghost says that the man who is a friend of temperance and abstinence *shall prolong life* (Eccl. xxxvii. 34). St. Jerome says that abstinence is the mother of health. Experience proves this truth. Among the hermits of the Thebaid and even often in our most austere cloisters, what robust health, what longevity! St. Paul, the first hermit, drank only water and ate only a small loaf of bread every day, yet he lived to the age of one hundred and thirteen years. A great number of hermits, whose names Church history has preserved to us, reached to an old age seldom attained nowadays. It is related of a French princess, daughter of King Louis XV., that having entered a convent of Carmelites, where the austerities are so great, where lard is never used in preparing food, and where the fast is almost continual, her health was, nevertheless, much better than at court where she was always ill.

V. The Church was not, therefore, cruel in instituting the law of abstinence. On the contrary, she acted only by the guidance of Providence and in the interest of our poor human nature. Even those who protest against fasting and abstinence, and who acknowledge neither Friday nor Lent, are often the first to have Lenten food served at their table and to impose upon themselves severe but forced privations for the good of their health.

But the Church in establishing the law of abstinence has much nobler and much more elevated views than the care of the corporal health. She intends first to make us honor by mortification the great mysteries of our holy religion, for instance, on Friday, the death and burial of Jesus Christ. She wishes to cool the ardor of the passions, to weaken concupiscence or the inclination towards evil, to render our life more comformable to that of Jesus, to make us expiate our faults through penance, and thus to incline to meditation, prayer, and more particularly to mortification.

Will you then dare to say that the law of abstinence is not a wise and wholesome law? Will you hesitate to submit yourselves to it? It is with this law as with those which oblige you to attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days, to annual confession and Easter communion; you cannot be true children of the Church if you do not observe it faithfully.

But you will tell me: "I am sick, or only regaining my health, or my constitution is too weak." If your indisposition is only slight, undoubtedly you are not permitted to eat meat on forbidden days; but you can dispense with the law of fasting and abstinence, if your illness is grave, and if in good faith you can say that Lenten food would be hurtful to you. If the matter is evident, you do not need permission; if there is doubt, you must be authorized by your pastor or confessor.

"But what should I do when traveling, or in restaurants, in hotels, where only meat is the main part of the meal?" You must ask for Lenten food and insist thereon. Hotel keepers are, as a rule, very willing to serve whatever is asked for. Certainly, there are some who trouble themselves little about this matter, and do not care about the law of abstinence. But then go and take your meals elsewhere; if you cannot do so you may use flesh-meat once or twice.

You may make the very ordinary excuse: "I am a common laborer, a tradesman. I have to make my living in working for Protestants as for Catholics. Now, very often non-Catholics do not offer anything but flesh-meat, and I do not dare to ask them for Lenten food." But why do you not dare? It is fear and human respect which moves you to transgress the law of the Church. But do you really believe that this will excuse you? What! because people might laugh at you, because they might ridicule the Catholic practice, you are willing to betray your duties, to offend God in violating the laws of the Church! But, apart from the religious sentiments, is such conduct worthy of a man of character, of firmness and dignity? Is it not the most shameful of all weaknesses? Non-Catholics "do not offer anything but flesh meat," you say. But why do you not ask them for something else? Why do you not tell them: "I am a Catholic, and my Church forbids me to eat flesh-meat to-day. Certainly, they would willingly furnish you with Lenten food; and instead of laughing at you, they would esteem you so much more for your fidelity to your Church. No respectable person will laugh at you for being faithful to the laws of your Church, and you need not mind what vulgar persons say.

The Old Testament furnishes a glorious example of fidelity to the law of abstinence in the history of Eleazar. This holy old man refused to eat the meat which the law of Moses prohibited, and was condemned to death by King Antiochus. The friends of Eleazar advised him to submit, at least in appearance, to the orders of the tyrant, in order to save his life. But the holy old man answered: "Do you believe that I am so attached to the few days of life left to

me that I should prefer them to what I owe to God? And even if through this cowardly complacency I should escape the fury of the tyrant, would I escape the vengeance of the One who shall judge me at the last day? No, no, I choose rather to die than to dishonor my religion, and it shall not be said that at the age of ninety years I abandoned the law of God, and that I became a scandal to my posterity." Thereupon he was led to execution.

Imitate this noble example, and observe faithfully the law of abstinence. What precious advantages will you not find therein! You will mortify the passions which drag you down to so many sins, you will expiate your sins, you will teach your children to be respectful and obedient towards God; for has He not said in speaking of His Church: *Whosoever hears you, hears me; whosoever despises you, despises me;* and you will merit the reward promised to the obedient and faithful servant. Amen.

## XXXIX. INSTRUCTION

### On the Second Commandment of the Church (*Cont'd*)

#### On Fasting

I. *The Fast.*—The fast is to abstain from certain food, for a motive of religion, for a determined time. As ordained by the Church fasting consists of three things: To abstain from flesh-meat, to take only one full meal, and to take it at a certain hour of the day.

First, abstinence from flesh-meat is, therefore, the first condition of fasting. By flesh-meat we mean flesh from animals, except those living in water. Not only must we abstain from flesh-meat, but also from all that is derived from flesh-meat, such as blood, the juice, marrow, and lard. These kind of nourishments cannot be used without special permission. As to the amphibious animals which live partly in water and partly on land, such as the moor-hens, otters, marsh-crows, and other similar ones, it is not easy to determine whether they are permitted or not. Generally, on days of abstinence, only those

animals having little blood, or cold blood, as the fishes, are allowed to be eaten. In case of doubt it is best to abstain. For some years past, in a large number of dioceses, the bishops, by virtue of indults of the sovereign pontiff, have granted permission to eat flesh-meat during Lent on certain days of the week. This must not astonish us, because the one who has made the law can also dispense from it. But we must not forget that this permission, as a rule, is granted only under the condition that an alms be given, if possible, or that certain prayers be said, and that on the days of fast when meat is allowed, fish and flesh must not be served at the same meal. However, by a special dispensation from the Holy See, those who are not obliged to fast may eat meat, on the days when it is allowed, several times a day. This, at least, is the permission granted to many dioceses in the United States.

The second condition of fasting is to take only *one full meal a day.* At this meal one may take all that is necessary for the support of the body. The rules of temperance must be observed, and this meal must not be interrupted by a long interval, at least without good reasons, nor must it be too much prolonged, two hours for example.

However, besides the one full meal, custom allows a slight collation about six o'clock in the evening; also, a small piece of bread or a cracker, with a cup of coffee, or chocolate, is allowed in the morning.

At the evening collation, flesh-meat cannot be taken, nor anything prepared with lard. But in many dioceses of the United States fish, milk, butter, as well as vegetables prepared with butter or milk, are allowed. The Lenten Regulations, which are published at the beginning of the Lenten season, are the surest guide. In regard to the quantity of food to be taken at the collation, it is generally agreed that it should not be more than one-fourth of an ordinary meal, not counting the drink. A general rule on this point can hardly be made; but the strength of each person, and the kind of work in which he is employed, should be taken into consideration.

To eat outside of the full meal, or of the collation, is breaking the fast more or less. Theologians generally agree that it would be a mortal sin to take at one time, or at separate times together, the equivalent of a collation.

The third condition of fasting is to take the full meal *at a certain hour of the day.* In the first centuries of the Church this meal was taken only towards the evening, or about three o'clock in the afternoon. This custom lasted until the thirteenth century. Then the full

meal began to be taken at noon, and the collation in the evening. About the fifteenth century the Church sanctioned this custom and regulated the manner of fasting. But to-day the custom allows us to take dinner a little before noon, that is after eleven o'clock. It would be sinful to take it any sooner without good reasons. To take the full meal two hours before noon might constitute a grievous sin. It is not even lawful, without good reason, to change the order of meals, and make a collation in the morning, in order to defer the meal until evening.

II. Why does the Church prescribe fasting? First, to give us an efficacious remedy to weaken and subdue our passions. We are all subject to concupiscence, that is, we have within us a great inclination towards evil. This inclination increases in the same measure as our body is nourished. Therefore, the means to combat and to reduce our evil inclinations is to chastise our body and to mortify ourselves through privations and penance.

To enter into the spirit of the Church, our good mother, it is not sufficient merely to mortify the body by retrenching some of the nourishment, but we must also mortify the spirit by occupying it with wholesome thoughts; the heart, by promptly removing all evil desires, and the senses, by denying them whatever flatters them, as idle discourses, prolonged sleep, noisy or passionate amusements. This is what the Church recommends to us in the hymn of Lent: *Utamur ergo parcius verbis, cibis et potibus, somno, jocis, et arctius perstemus in custodia.*

Second, the Church, by the law of fasting, intends to prepare us for prayer. In fact, says St. John Chrysostom, fasting is the nourishment of the soul, it gives it wings to raise itself to heaven and contemplate the divine perfections. This is what we experience every day, for whilst excesses in eating and drinking weigh down the spirit in such a manner that it is hardly capable of noble thought, mortification, on the contrary, elevates it, arouses it, inflames it, and renders it capable of the purest sentiments and the most salutary thoughts and meditations. This is why God required Moses to fast for forty days before appearing before Him upon Mount Sinai to receive there the instructions necessary for the guidance of His people. So, also, it was only after three weeks of continual fast that Daniel learned from God the time of the coming of the Messiah, and the circumstances of His life and death.

Finally, the Church commands fasting in order to expiate our sins, and to prepare us to obtain the necessary graces. Nothing proves better the benefits of fasting than the examples which we find in Holy Scripture. The children of Israel having displeased God by great crimes, the Philistines guided by His invisible hand fell upon them to take revenge. The Israelites had recourse to fasting and prayer, and the Lord was appeased and gave them the victory over their enemies. Achab, the most wicked of men, was threatened by God with the most dreadful chastisements if he did not do penance. The wicked prince covered himself with sackcloth, and fasted, and the Lord revoked the judgment pronounced against him. Nineveh was admonished by the prophet Jonas that within three days it should be destroyed. The Ninevites had recourse to fasts, and they were preserved from ruin.

Fasting not only expiates sin, but also obtains from God the graces and benefits necessary for us. It was through fasting that Anna obtained her child Samuel; it was through fasting that Sara was delivered from the devil; it was through fasting that the saints merited the gift of prophecy and miracles, and raised themselves to such eminent sanctity. It was through fasting and prayer that whole cities and nations were often delivered from pest and other plagues.

How blind and senseless are, therefore, those bad Christians who complain of this holy law! Is not a disciple of Jesus Christ a disciple of the cross, and must not his life be a life of mortification and penance? On considering the fearful privations and austerities which the saints imposed upon themselves, how can we expect to reach heaven by indolence and pleasure?

III. The Church is a tender mother who does not wish to impose burdens upon us above our strength, and there are, therefore, reasons which may dispense from the law of fasting. The first is, moral impossibility on account of the weakness of youth or of old age, or on account of some illness or grave inconvenience.

*The Weakness of Age.*—A person is not bound to fast who has not attained the age of twenty-one years. However, young people should be encouraged not to wait until the age of twenty-one before commencing to practice mortification of some kind.

*The Weakness of Old Age.*—Old people are dispensed from fasting when they are in such a state of weakness and debility that they can no longer fast without serious inconvenience, generally at the age of sixty or seventy years.

*Illness.*—Not only those who are sick in bed, but also the infirm, convalescents, and generally all those who have such a weak constitution that they cannot fast without serious injury to their health, are excused from fasting.

Finally, those *who cannot fast without serious inconvenience.* Nurses, pregnant women, persons to whom fasting causes great headache and stomach troubles, and, generally, all those who are so poor that they have not even what is necessary for one full meal per day, are dispensed from the fasts of the Church.

The second reason which dispenses from fast is *labor.* Not, indeed, all kinds of labor, but hard and painful labor which is incompatible with fasting, as that of farmers, miners, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, and other like tradesmen. This kind of labor dispenses from fasting if it lasts the whole day, or at least a great part of the day; but not when it lasts only a few hours. As to the less laborious trades, such as shoemaking, weaving, tailoring, it is somewhat doubtful, and it belongs to the confessor to decide.

The third reason which dispenses from fasting is *traveling.* This refers to travels made on foot, which take up the greater part of the day and which are necessary. A walk of a few hours, or hunting parties which are undertaken merely for amusement, do not dispense from fasting. As to the journeys one makes on horseback or in a vehicle or by rail, no fixed rule can be established; each one must consult his own strength as it is only the fatigue which decides.

The fourth and last reason for dispensation from fasting, is *piety* or the obligation to do a good work which is incompatible with fasting, as when a nurse attends a sick person day and night. Charity goes before all, and in this and similar cases fasting would be really almost impossible.

IV. These are the reasons which dispense from fasting. If the existence of a good reason is undoubted, everyone can exempt himself from the law; but if the reason is not evident, the parish priest or one's confessor should be consulted. Be careful not to deceive yourselves, and to rank mere pretexts among lawful reasons. In doubtful situations, the reasons must be weighed and decision taken with Christian uprightness and sincerity. If a person cannot pay the entire debt, he is still obliged to pay all that he can. If you cannot fast every day of the week, but can fast three or four days, you must do so. If you cannot fast the whole day, you must fast half the day. If you cannot fast

and abstain at the same time, but can do the one or the other, you must either fast or abstain.

Those persons who cannot in any way fulfill the law of fasting either on account of the weakness of health, or on account of hard work, should compensate for the fast by prayer, alms-giving, or other good works. Let the sick offer up their sufferings in expiation for their sins. Let those whose health is weak compensate for the fast by charitable works. Let the laborer offer to God his day's work in a spirit of penance.

And you, whom no legitimate reason hinders from fasting, obey the law of the Church, our good and holy mother; to disobey her is to disobey God Himself. Let no pretext hinder you from fasting if you are able to fast. Fast in union with Jesus Christ in the desert and with all the holy souls in the world. Fast, not only because the Church commands you, but because, being sinners, you are in need of penance. Do not content yourselves with making your body fast, but make your soul fast by avoiding sin. Purify yourselves from the faults which you have already committed by a good and sincere confession. It is thus that you will pay your debts to the justice of God and merit the reward which God has promised to pious and mortified souls. Amen.

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## XL. INSTRUCTION

### On the Third and Fourth Commandments of the Church

I. The Third Commandment of the Church is *to confess at least once a year*. These words are the summary of the decree of the Lateran Council, held in the thirteenth century, which commands every Catholic who has reached the age of discretion to confess faithfully all his sins, at least once a year, to his own pastor, and to carefully perform the penance imposed upon him.

"Every Catholic." Hence, this commandment obliges everybody, great and small, rich and poor, priests and religious, as well as the laity.

"Who has reached the age of discretion," that is, that age when a person begins to distinguish between good and evil. This time is

generally reckoned to be about the age of seven years. When children have attained this age, their parents must send them to confession, and if they do not do this, they are guilty of sin. They must also inspire them with sentiments of contrition, and give to them a correct and exact idea of confession. Children thus instructed will accustom themselves quite early to have the proper dispositions for confession.

"To confess faithfully all his sins." To satisfy this precept, it must be a worthy confession, accompanied with sentiments of contrition, and followed by absolution. This is what the theologians generally understand by the decree. It would be a great error to believe that the law of the Church is fulfilled by a mere formal confession, without examination of conscience, without sorrow, without any purpose of amendment, and perhaps solely to satisfy a father, a mother, an employer, or to do as others do. Undoubtedly, it is better to confess only once a year than not to confess at all, because it is at least a beginning of obedience, always an act of a child submissive to the Church; but if the confession be unworthy, far from fulfilling the precept of the Church, you commit another mortal sin.

"At least once a year." There is no period fixed by the Church; but since she commands us to go to communion during Easter time, she thereby indicates her desire that we should also go to confession during the Easter time.

But in commanding us to confess our sins at least once a year, the Church does not intend to limit us to one confession a year. God forbid! She merely fixed a limit which we cannot transgress without rendering ourselves guilty of sin. It is always her desire that we should go to confession frequently. The object of confession is not only to purify us from sin, but also to preserve us from sin, and to go to confession only once a year would defeat the very end of the sacrament. To limit oneself to annual confession would be to expose oneself to fulfill this duty badly. It is very difficult to recollect all one's sins of a whole year and to have sincere contrition for them. It would be risking the salvation of one's soul, at least if one has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin, for as long as one is in this unfortunate state, he can do nothing meritorious, and a sudden death would cast him into hell for all eternity. Frequent confession is an excellent means to subdue one's passions and to surmount the obstacles opposed to the practice of virtue. I am not afraid to say that a great cause of so many persons of every age and sex going astray is their neglect of confession.

"To his own pastor or, with his permission, to another priest approved." Who is the proper pastor to whom you must make your annual confession of precept? It is the Pope in the whole Church, the bishop and his vicar-general in the whole diocese, and the parish priest in each one's parish. During Easter time all the powers of absolution are reserved to the parish priest alone, and no one can go to confession to another priest, even though approved, without the permission of the parish priest.* The Church has made this regulation because the pastor of a parish has the special care of his flock and has to render an account to God of all the souls intrusted to him, and, consequently, should know his flock. This permission is never refused if it is asked for; but those who do not confess to their own pastor should be careful not to seek more lenient confessors. Their only view should be to make an unrestrained and more sincere confession.

II. The Fourth Commandment of the Church is *to receive the Holy Eucharist during Easter time.* In the first centuries the Church had no need to command the faithful to receive the Holy Eucharist. The early Christians showed the greatest zeal in receiving Holy Communion, but fervor diminished by degrees, piety became weaker, and laymen fell into the habit of communicating very rarely. To remedy this indifference the Church imposed upon her children a rigorous obligation, and required that they should receive communion at least three times a year: namely, at Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas. But lukewarmness increased, and the neglect of the sacraments having become almost general, the Church reduced her precept to the Easter communion solely, but this time with the penalty of excommunication against those who would not comply with this regulation. The terms of the decree of the Lateran Council are: "Every Catholic who has attained the age of discretion must receive with respect, at least at Easter, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, unless, following the advice of his own parish priest, for some reasonable cause he judges good to abstain from it for some time; otherwise he cannot enter the church during life, and when he dies he is to be deprived of Christian burial."

"Every Catholic who has reached the age of discretion." This law is, therefore, general, as that of annual confession, and obliges everybody without exception of rank, fortune, and condition, from the age

* This regulation holds good only in those countries where parishes are canonically organized. Since we have no such parishes in the United States, the faithful are free to make their confession to any duly authorized priest.

of discretion, which is generally understood in this case to be of from ten to fourteen years. Therefore, every person who has attained this age, and who, by his fault, does not receive the Holy Eucharist at Easter time, renders himself guilty of a grievous sin. Parents are obliged to have their children instructed in time, to watch over their conduct, and to send them often to confession, in order that they may make their first communion as soon as they can "discern the body of the Lord."

"Must receive with respect"; that is, receive the sacrament with the proper dispositions, in the state of grace, and with sentiments of the most profound humility. A sacrilegious communion does not fulfill this precept; on the contrary, it would add only another sin to those one has already committed.

"At least at Easter"; this means within the Easter time which, as a rule, in the United States begins on the first Sunday of Lent and ends on Trinity Sunday. The Church selected the feast of Easter, because it is the most solemn feast of the year, and is the time when our Saviour instituted the Blessed Eucharist. Those who for lawful reasons cannot communicate during the time prescribed, are obliged, under pain of mortal sin, to do so as soon as possible. Although Easter time may be over, the obligation always exists. Easter communion ought to be received in the parish church, except special permission is given by the pastor to receive it elsewhere, or the church which represents the parochial church, such as chapels of religious communities, hospitals, seminaries, colleges, etc., approved for this purpose by the bishop.

But in limiting her precept to the Easter communion, it is not the intention of the Church that the faithful should limit themselves to only one communion a year. On the contrary, she invites and exhorts us to go often to renew our strength in this sacred banquet. The Councils of the Church, and the Fathers, faithful interpreters of the wishes of our Saviour, never cease to recommend to us frequent communion. Our soul is in need of this food, and weak as we are, and surrounded by so many enemies who are trying to ruin us, can we hope to remain firm and invincible without the frequent use of this divine nourishment which is *the bread of the strong and the wine which makes virgins.*

How deplorable is the conduct of those ungrateful Christians who go so rarely to holy communion, and especially of those who remain away from the holy table even during Easter time, and who have no

regard either to the laws of the Church, or to their own wants? But remember, unfaithful Christians, if you still merit the name of Christians, that you fail grievously in the submission which you owe to the holy Church, your mother, and that you incur her severest censures, because she threatens to refuse you entrance into her temples during life, and Christian burial after death, if you do not change your life. These censures, it is true, are only threatened and are not incurred by the sole fact in failing in one's Easter duty. It is left to the bishop to put them into execution according to circumstances, after having exhausted all milder means with which wisdom may inspire him. There is only one case in which the yearly communion may be deferred beyond Easter time, and that is when a confessor thinks it proper for the soul of his penitent. But this you cannot do without the permission of the confessor, and a person would sin mortally if he were to follow his own will in this matter.

May you, my brethren, well understand the obligations, so important for a Christian, which the Church imposes upon you in the Third and Fourth Commandments! May you observe them in future as religion requires, and as you would like to have done at the hour of death! Amen.

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## XLI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Fifth Commandment of the Church

*On the Support of the Church and Our Pastors*

I. Catholics are bound under pain of sin to contribute to the support of their pastor and his assistants. St. Paul says: *So the Lord ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel* (I. Cor. ix. 13–14).

The duty of supporting our pastor is so self-evident that we find this duty regulated among all the nations of antiquity. Under the Old Law, God Himself commanded the people of Israel to give tithes and offerings for the support of the priesthood and maintenance of worship. In the Church, from the beginning, this was a sacred duty; for the first Christians considered it an obligation of conscience to

support their pastors. This obligation soon became a canon law, and since the time of the Emperor Charlemagne a State law, and this under the form of tithe. Limited at first to the crops, it soon was extended to the cattle, and the products of labor and of commerce. The obligation of paying tithes was absolute, only the Crusaders were exempt from it. In England and Ireland, the tithes still constitute the salary of the clergy, but these can be no longer exacted in natural products. Their value was fixed in 1835, according to an estimation of the harvests figured on an average of seven years and amounting to about forty million dollars. In other European countries, for the support of the clergy and maintenance of worship in general, they follow about the same plan. Since in the United States the Church is altogether separated from the State, the obligation to contribute to the support of its ministers, to the building and maintenance of church and school, depends on the offerings of the people.*

Whatever means are adopted in the parish to this end, Catholics must be willing to do their share, whether it be by paying a fixed amount of dues, pew rent, seat money, or by contributing to certain collections and entertainments, and making certain customary offerings in receiving the administrations of religion.

II. *Who Are Obliged to Contribute to This Support?*—All members of the parish who have an income of their own, whether they are married or single, whether they have families or not, whether they live with their families, board, or live for themselves. Moreover, sons and daughters who pay their board, and have the balance of their income for their own use, are bound equally as well as their parents to contribute to the support of their church, school, and pastor.

Those who have no children to send to church or school must not think that they have less obligation to support the two institutions. Such a policy would be business, but not religion. On the contrary, the greater the means the greater the obligation to support both church and school.

Servants and others having small salaries must be willing to pay such dues as are fixed for them by their pastor, as well as to contribute to other sources of church revenue.

Persons not able to pay the fixed dues, either through continued poverty, or for the time being, are bound to make their circumstances

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* *Now we quote Rev. Alexander L. A. Klauder, "Catholic Practice."*

known to the pastor, or be considered delinquents. To neither pay nor make any excuse to the pastor is considered either pure neglect of duty, pride, or obstinacy.

Parties failing both to pay for their pews or seats, and to give an explanation for it, should remember that they forfeit their right to them. It requires no notice on the part of the pastor to such, in order that he may be justified in disposing of their pew or seat in favor of others.

Whatever misunderstanding may exist between pew holders and ushers, clerks, and others, should be reported at once to those in charge, or to the pastor himself.

Parties failing to report in due time cannot expect their grievances to be adjusted afterwards to the discomfort of innocent parties.

Pay your dues or pew rent at the appointed time and place, and see that you receive credit for it. Do not expect the pastor or any one else to carry the pew book about with him. If through your neglect of these rules, and through your own awkwardness, you find that you have not been credited for your payment, you will have yourself to blame.

Parties unwilling to take part in church entertainments or unable to attend them should at least do their share by purchasing tickets or otherwise contributing to their object. If the character of such entertainments be not always to one's taste, the object of them, at least, should always be.

If you have been accidentally overlooked at the regular church collection, either at one that is taken up within the church itself, or at a house-to-house collection in the parish, bring your contribution, nevertheless, to the pastor or to those in charge. Do not take advantage of such an oversight, when you would otherwise have contributed. Such conduct is unworthy of any one calling himself a Catholic.

The duty of Catholics to support the parochial school in particular, is set forth by the bishops of this country among other urgent admonitions in the following appeal:—

"The laity should give a sufficient and generous support to the schools. They must, therefore, unite their efforts, as to be able to meet all the necessary expenses in the parochial school. The faithful must be reminded, be it in pastoral letters, be it in sermons or in private interviews, that they offend grievously against their duty if they neglect by every possible effort and expense to provide for Catholic schools.

"This should be more especially brought home to the minds of those Catholics who are prominent by their wealth and authority. Parents should, therefore, promptly and willingly pay the little monthly contribution which is exacted for each child. The other members of the parish, however, must not be unwilling to establish and increase any fund that may be necessary or reasonable for the maintenance of the schools. All, then, whether parents or other heads of families, or young people who have means of their own, should be ready to give their name to any institution by which they may help by regular contributions, however small they may be, to support the schools, or to make them, if only in part, at least, free schools. The existence of such an institution in every parish is greatly to be recommended. Many of such have been established, and have been signally blessed by the sovereign pontiff. If all the faithful do their share towards this most sacred object, the result will be improvement in the internal excellence as well as the external appearance of the school, increase of teachers on the one hand, and fewer children in the multiplied classes on the other, and, consequently, better grading throughout; all of which will wonderfully tend to raise the standard of our schools." ("Acts and Decrees of the *Third Plenary Council of Baltimore*," No. 202.)

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## XLII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sixth Commandment of the Church*—On Mixed Marriages

*Neither shalt thou make marriages with them. Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son, for she will turn thy son from following me that he may serve strange gods, and the wrath of the Lord shall be kindled and will quickly destroy thee* (Deut. vii. 3–4).

I. Such are the words of solemn warning which God addressed to the chosen people when they were about to enter the Promised Land. The Jews were blessed with the true religion in their day, and lest that

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* *For other instructions on marriage, see Instructions XXIV. and XXV. on the sacrament of matrimony.*

religion should be lost or even dulled in their hearts, marriage with unbelievers was forbidden. In other words, mixed marriages were not allowed. Any one who believes that life is a serious business, and not a time to be frittered away on useless things, will easily realize the all-consuming *importance of this subject*. He will easily see that on well-assorted marriages depends the spiritual and temporal prosperity of the parties concerned; that on them depend the rigid training, physical and mental, of the children; and the teaching of these children to be dutiful sons and daughters, good men and good women, good citizens in this life, and, eventually, citizens of heaven. He will see that the future of the world, the well-being of society, the progress of mankind, depends largely upon the sanctity of the marriage tie. He will understand, on the other hand, how ill-assorted marriages bring naught save desolation to the household, blight to life's early promise, death to the pleasures of life, all manner of woe to the offspring of such a union, and, perhaps, perpetual ruin in the next life. He will see that though marriages are popularly said to be made in heaven, some of them bear the impress of Lucifer upon them. I say these things, not for the purpose of discouraging marriage, for that would be contrary to the interests of the State, contrary to the interests of the Church, contrary to the interests of your souls; but I say it in order that you may be induced to use your judgment and to exercise a caution in the selection of a partner, in some way proportionate to the gravity of the question.

II. We Catholics look upon marriage as a *civil contract*, that is, a contract to be entered into according to the just laws of the country, having due regard for temporal concerns of the contracting parties; we look upon marriage as a contract arising from the law of nature, binding the contracting parties to certain duties and obligations, and binding them for life; we also look upon it *as a sacrament of the New Law*, and as such it requires a careful preparation such as you make for the reception of any other sacrament. We look upon marriage as binding the parties for life, not as a thing wherein one may set the other aside, and that, as sometimes happens, for a most trivial reason such as what is euphemistically called *incompatibility of temper;* not as something wherein one may repudiate the other as you throw away a worn-out hat or a threadbare coat; we believe that when a Catholic man and a Catholic woman promise in the marriage ceremony to accept each other till death parts them, they mean it; we hold the teaching of Christ on the

indissolubility of the bond of Christian marriage, as laid down in His Sermon on the Mount; we accept His conclusion contained in the words: *What God hath joined together let no man put asunder* (Matt. xiv. 6). We look upon marriage as a sacrament, for so the Church considered it even at a time when all admitted her to be the one true Church, so the Scriptures insinuate and the Fathers teach, and the Council of Trent declares it is "truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law instituted by Christ." We look upon it as a holy sacrament; holy in its founder who is Jesus Christ; holy in its signification, for it is a figure of the union of the Divine Word with human nature, a hallowed copy of the union of Christ with His Church, and of the Holy Ghost with the souls of the just; holy in its effects which are sanctifying and actual graces; holy in the object of its institution which is to multiply the children of God, and bring them to eternal salvation. These things being so, it is all the more incumbent on people to follow the wisest councils in selecting partners for life.

III. It is a well-known fact, and admitted by all jurists, that the Canon Law — the law of the Church — is *most wise and just;* and the chief excellencies of other codes are to be found where the principles laid down in our Canon Law have been adopted. To the laws of our Church, then, we have to look for the best course to be followed in reference to marriage. She has power to make laws for the good government of her subjects, because she is a society, and as such has power to govern her own members; and because Christ gave her all power necessary or ever useful for the right government of a Christian commonwealth. In the exercise of that power, in order to promote the spiritual and, indeed, the temporal welfare of her children, she has decreed that there shall be certain *impediments to matrimony.* The law of nature itself, that is, the law imprinted as it were on our hearts, telling us that certain things are of their own nature good and therefore ought to be done, and that certain things are inherently bad and therefore to be avoided — this grand law, coming directly from the Creator's hand, puts certain impediments to marriage. Some impediments make marriage null and void; others render it unlawful but not invalid. We are dealing here with one obstacle only, and that is *the difference of religion* in the contracting parties.

IV. For all practical purposes we may describe a mixed marriage to be a marriage between *a Catholic and a non-Catholic*, whether the

latter be baptized or unbaptized. If there be question between an unbaptized person marrying a Catholic, the marriage, according to the discipline of our Church, is null and void. If we mean a marriage between a Catholic and a non-Catholic who is baptized, the marriage is valid but not lawful unless a dispensation be obtained from the prohibitory law.

V. A great deal of misapprehension obtains in reference to *mixed marriages*. Some seem to think that the opposition of the Church in this matter is a new-fangled idea, whereas, if there be anything clear from ecclesiastical history, it is the stern opposition of the Church in every age to these unhallowed unions. Others imagine, because they have known some cases of mixed marriages to have taken place with ecclesiastical permission, that, therefore, they are not forbidden. The Church allows mixed marriages in some cases where dispensations from the law have been granted for sufficient reason; but in such cases, and in such only, does she permit them. Some have an idea that it is altogether a matter of discretion for the pastor whether he will marry persons of different religions or not. The truth is this: The pastor has not discretionary powers. The people are bound to observe the laws of the Church; the pastor is bound to see that they do observe them. We must not be understood as finding fault with our Protestant brethren when we set our face against mixed marriages. Why should we find fault with those who follow the dictates of conscience? We believe with the late Dr. Murray, of Maynooth College, who spoke for the Protestants of Ireland, and with Cardinal Newman, who gave his opinion in reference to the sincerity of his Protestant fellow-countrymen, and with Dr. Libermann, who might be looked upon as an authority on German Protestantism, that the vast majority of Protestants are in good faith, and they honestly think they are journeying by a safe way to heaven. But we do find fault with the Catholic who deliberately sets the laws of his Church at defiance, who brings disgrace upon himself and upon his religion, and far-reaching misery upon his offspring. We say, as the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant is not good for the former, so the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant is not good for the latter.

VI. Mixed marriages are forbidden by the *Sacred Scriptures*. The whole drift of God's law in the Old Testament on this subject, from the sixth chapter of Genesis, where we are told the sons of Seth married the daughters of Cain, who were unbelievers, on to the direct

prohibition in Deuteronomy: *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them*, is one uncompromising protest against these unions. These are forbidden by an ecclesiastical law which is absolute and universal. It is universal, for it extends to all lands and Christian peoples; it is absolute, for it is enacted on the presumption that danger exists, and, therefore, according to the general principle of such laws, it binds even when one may prudently judge that there is no spiritual danger in a particular case, so that, even in the absence of all danger, a Catholic contracting such a marriage without a dispensation from the prohibitory law would be guilty of grievous sin.

VII. Mixed marriages are forbidden by a *law of nature* because of the many and dangerous evils which spring from them. There is, first of all, *the danger of perversion*, or *loss of faith*. This danger arises from such familiar association as must necessarily exist between man and wife, from non-Catholic books, from the various threats, snares, entreaties, flatteries, that are made use of to effect such a purpose. And if the faith of a Catholic be not always destroyed, it is sometimes made cold and practically dead. The second danger is that the children of such a marriage may not be brought up in the Catholic Church. This is no imaginary danger, and everyone knows some sad example of it. All the circumstances of such marriages tend to this result. The difficulty of common prayer, the difficulty of preserving Catholic surroundings in the home, the difficulty as to the fulfillment of religious duties, the evil example of seeing one parent going to one Church, the other to another, all show how serious is the danger which threatens the faith of the children of a mixed marriage.

The third great danger is that of indifference to all religion. Mixed marriages foster *indifferentism*—the great bane of the age. They tend to make people forget the divine commission to *preach the Gospel to every creature*. Christ did not mean that the apostles should preach any Gospel which their fancy might suggest, but He meant *whatsoever I have commanded you*. They incline people to the belief that one religion is as good as another, a belief which is in direct opposition to the old Creed drawn up by the apostles, in which we say: *I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church.*

The fourth danger is that of *dissensions in the family circle*. For a true Christian marriage, grace should meet grace, and faith should be united with faith. Even the very minds should be married, and to the union of true minds there should be no obstacle. A harmony of

souls is necessary for the happiness. There are causes enough for disagreement between husband and wife, without adding a needless one —that of difference of religion. The man who was as a wooer, or lover, all sweetness, may as a husband have very little respect or even toleration for his wife's religious opinions.

The next great danger arises from this, lest *the Catholic party should die* and thus leave the children exposed to the almost moral certainty of being brought up in another faith, or, worse still, without any belief whatever. Catholics who incur this risk run counter to the teachings of St. Paul in the words: *If any have not care for his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel* (I. Tim. v. 8). Non-Catholics who believe they can be saved as easily in one church as in another may not see the point of this. But Catholics who believe in the one true Church, who have no reason and no room for doubt, who know the truth and can give a reason for their faith, Catholics, we repeat, are the ones who are reprehensible if they willingly expose themselves to these dangers.

There is yet another danger. It is that of *divorce.* We believe that the marriage tie cannot be broken; we hold that no court of justice can separate those whom God has joined. Not so, however, with our separated brethren. In not a few of our States and Territories divorce is granted for many and trivial causes, causes so trifling as to promote merriment of the subject were it not so serious. With divorce come blighted hopes, withered prospects, disappointed affection, and all the ills that follow in the train of a ruined home.

VIII. And even though all these dangers be absent, yet a *dispensation* from the law of the Church is necessary — a dispensation never given without a grave cause, and generally in order to prevent greater evils. Whatever reasons may have existed in the past, it is seldom in the present circumstances of this country, and with the necessary number of Catholics, that we find solid reasons to justify such marriages. Before a dispensation from the prohibitory law can be obtained, the non-Catholic party must make certain promises in writing and in presence of witnesses. The non-Catholic must promise:—

1st. *To allow the Catholic full liberty of conscience in the exercise of Catholicity.*

2d. *That all the children shall be baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.*

3d. *That no other marriage ceremony shall take place than that by the Catholic priest.*

Even though all this were done, though a sufficient cause existed for a dispensation, though the required promises were made, though the dispensation were obtained, though the parties were married before the priest, how many are there who keep their word thus solemnly pledged? Those who are in a position to know, those whose daily life brings them in contact with mixed marriages and their results, tell us that the number who break their promises in this matter is simply astonishing. Nor can they be compelled by law to keep them, for it would appear that antenuptial promises are in point of law entirely void. Bishop Ullathorne presents this aspect of the question with great clearness and force: "It would be unjust," he writes, "as well as ungenerous, not to admit that there are Protestants who loyally keep the promises they have made in marriage with Catholics, and who truly respect the faith and religious exercises of their Catholic spouse, and fulfill their pledges respecting the education of the children. But prudence looks to what generally happens, and not to the exceptional cases, and wisdom never runs any serious risks in matters of the soul. The individuals and even the families that have fallen from the Church through mixed marriages amount to numbers incredible to those who have not examined the question thoroughly; and the number of Catholics bound at this moment in mixed marriages, who live in a hard and bitter conflict for the exercise of their religion, for that of their children, and in certain cases for the soundness of their morals, could they with all the facts be known, would deter any thoughtful Catholic from contracting a mixed marriage."

IX. Those are the chief reasons why the Church is opposed to mixed marriages. Her very ceremonial and ritual for mixed marriages bring out this opposition in stronger relief. A mixed marriage *cannot take place in Church.* There can be no nuptial Mass and no marriage blessing. The priest is present, but only as an official witness. He is not there to impart a blessing, and he does not pray for them in the name of God's Church. The ceremonial is deprived of the beautiful liturgy, and everything about it is more suggestive of a funeral than a marriage.

X. But in order to prevent the effects, we must *remove the causes.* Foremost amongst the causes of mixed marriages is a lack of serious

reflection. People entail upon themselves and upon others untold misery because they will not think. Well are we reminded of the words of Jeremias: *With desolation is the land made desolate, because there is no one that considereth in the hearth.* If a man build a house or buy a horse he will consult with those who are better informed than himself, but if he be about to contract a mixed marriage he will not stop to consider its consequences, nor pause to find out its dangers from those whose duty it is to know. A second cause of mixed marriages is lack of strong faith. The Church is the exponent of revealed truth, and the director of our actions. Now, if people had a lively faith in the Church of God, and would only realize the antagonism of the Church to such marriages, they would never think of contracting them. Other causes of mixed marriages are the absence of religious education, the neglect of the sacraments in early manhood and womanhood, the bad example of others, the absurd idea that Catholics, because of religious reasons, are inferior socially to non-Catholics, and the silly literature of the time. We refer, in particular, to the modern novel, for whilst novel-writing has very much degenerated of late, there are other departments of literature in which there are writers equal to those of any period, and more numerous than they have ever been since the dawn of English literature. There is yet another cause, and it is this: young people sometimes put themselves in such social intercourse that fancy and youthful thoughtlessness are likely to bring about these mischievous unions. There is no effect without cause. Take away these causes and the effect will not follow.

Take heed lest you be lead into a labyrinth of misery by mixed marriages. There is no need to marry a Philistine. There is no need of running the risk of being treated as poor old Samson the giant was, or as Socrates the philosopher was, or as Job, that time-honored example of patience, was, or as John Ruskin, the great art critic, was treated. Marry not for money, for then your partner may be looked upon as an incumbrance; marry not for convenience, for such marriages are usually an inconvenience; marry not for position, for that is acquired by merit, not by matrimony.

# FOURTH PART

## ON GRACE AND THE SACRAMENTS

### I. INSTRUCTION

#### On Grace

I. The word *graces* signifies, in general, a gift, a favor, a benefit of pure liberality, and which is not due under any title; otherwise, says St. Paul, it would be no longer a grace. God makes gifts to men, grants to them favors and benefits both in the natural and supernatural order. There are, therefore, two kinds of graces: natural grace and supernatural grace.

Natural graces are those which God grants to man without elevating him above his nature, and which refer directly to the present life, as health, the use of reason, the intellectual faculties, beauty, strength of the body, free will, temporal goods. . . . All these things are, undoubtedly, graces and benefits which come to us from God, because He does not owe them to us. But they are purely natural graces, because they end with the present life, and they have no reference at all to the supernatural end for which we were created, that is, to our salvation.

Supernatural graces are those which elevate man above his nature, which have no relation to the things of this world, and which God grants to man only to lead him to his last end, which is heaven.

In this instruction, which is one of the most important of the Christian doctrine, I shall speak only of supernatural grace; and as the matter is abstract, and difficult to understand, I beg you to give me your entire attention.

II. What is, therefore, supernatural grace, the grace which alone, among all others, is properly called grace? *It is a supernatural gift which God grants us to do good and avoid evil.*

1st. It is a *gift*, that is, a gratuitous help, a favor, a benefit. 2d. This gift is *supernatural* because it elevates us above our human and

earthly conditions, and prepares us for eternal happiness. 3d. *Which God grants us*, for only God can grant us grace; the angels, the saints, and the Blessed Virgin herself can only beg God's grace for us. 4th. *To do good and avoid evil*, for that is the only reason why grace is granted to us.

III. Supernatural grace is of two kinds: *habitual* or *sanctifying grace* and *actual grace*.

*Sanctifying* grace is that which justifies man, renders him agreeable to God, and from a sinner makes him a saint worthy of heaven. We receive this grace in baptism and in the sacrament of penance, if we have had the misfortune to lose it through mortal sin.

Nothing is more precious, nothing more ineffable than sanctifying grace. It is this grace which makes us the adopted children and heirs of the Heavenly Father, the brethren and coheirs of Jesus Christ and the living temples of the Holy Ghost. It is this which is the true life of the soul, because he who possesses sanctifying grace can say with St. Paul (Gal. II. 20): *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me;* and if our soul has the happiness to possess sanctifying grace at the moment of death, it is sure of eternal life.

What are all the goods and all the treasures of the world compared with this grace? St. Augustine says that it is infinitely more precious than even the privilege of the divine maternity. And this is true, for Mary could never have become the mother of God, if previously she had not been sanctified by grace. And the Angelic Doctor, St. Thomas, teaches that this grace is in us the beginning of glory, just as the glory in heaven is the consummation of grace. Consummated grace is the perfect union of the creature with the Creator, and sanctifying grace is the beginning of this union.

As long as we possess sanctifying grace, God dwells in our soul as in His temple, and overwhelms it with benefits. Just as the branch, as long as it remains connected with the stem, shares in all its sap and bears fruit in season, so, also, the just soul, as long as it remains united with God, enjoys all His favors, partakes of all the spiritual goods of the Church, and every day adds new merits to those already acquired. Wonderful effects of sanctifying grace! Through it you have a share in all the prayers and all the good works of the faithful of all the world, in all the mortifications and in all the acts of charity and devotedness practiced by so many holy missionaries, by so many fervent religious, by so many holy souls, and without it you share in

nothing. With it all your works are works of life, agreeable to God and meritorious for heaven, and without it all your works are sterile and dead. With it every good action, even a drink of water given to a poor man out of love for God, is deserving of eternal happiness; and without it, even if you should give to the poor all you have, and if you should fast every day on bread and water, you might, indeed, obtain the grace of conversion, but you would never acquire the least merit for heaven.

One might justly apply to santifying grace the words of the Canticle of Canticles (IV. 7): *Thou art all beautiful, my beloved, and there is no spot in thee.* Sanctifying grace is a pearl, a diamond, which cannot be kept with too much care when one possesses it; and the price of this pearl increases more and more by the practice of virtue and of good works, through the sacraments and prayer. Just as in heaven the saints are elevated in glory according to their merits, so also upon earth souls become more and more agreeable to God, and have a greater share in His liberality, in proportion as they are more pure and more perfect.

IV. Sanctifying grace is also called *habitual* grace, because when once obtained it dwells and resides in us in a constant and uninterrupted manner, until we lose it by mortal sin. If we examine ourselves, can we say we possess this grace? Alas! it is given to none to have a perfect certitude of this, for the Holy Ghost says: *Man knoweth not whether he is worthy of love or hatred* (Eccl. IX. 1). This means that, however advanced in virtue we may be, we can never be sure of salvation. However, if our conscience has no serious reproach to make to us, we may have confidence that we possess sanctifying grace. Let us, then, be careful not to lose it. Oh! how fragile is the vessel which contains it, and how many dangers there are for us! Dangers from the devil, always plotting our ruin; dangers from the world, on account of its seductions and scandals, dangers from our own passions, always in revolt against us! Let us continually watch and pray, according to the recommendation of our divine Master.

V. The second kind of supernatural grace is *actual* grace. Actual grace is the grace which God grants to us from day to day, according as we ask it from Him, or according to our needs. Actual grace is either *exterior* or *interior*. *Exterior* actual graces are such as good example, charitable advices, Christian education, the evangelical preaching, pious reading, etc. *Interior* actual graces are the good

thoughts and the holy inspirations by which God enlightens our mind, or pious affections and desires which touch our heart. Picture to yourselves a good mother assisting her child to walk. She takes him by the hand, supports him, leads him, and if it is dark she lights the way. It is thus that God acts with us. He enlightens our minds either through His ministers and the reading of good books, or directly by His holy inspiration. He warms our heart, sustains it, either through the pathetic exhortations of a preacher or a zealous confessor, or through the sacraments and through remorses of conscience. For example, you find yourselves in dangerous occasions of sin, and an interior voice tells you to flee; this is grace. You have the misfortune to commit a grievous sin, and an interior voice prompts you to go to confession and do penance for it; this is grace.

VI. Is this actual grace necessary for us? It is. On account of the sin of our first parents, we have fallen into a state of ignorance and weakness, so that of ourselves we can neither know our duties nor fulfill them, if God does not come to our assistance. We are like the child still in leading strings, who cannot make a step without its mother taking it by the hand. Not only can we do nothing meritorious for our salvation, but, according to the doctrine of St. Paul, we cannot even have a thought, except it comes to us from God: *Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God* (II. Cor. III. 5).

VII. What a subject of humiliation for us! And at the same time what a powerful motive to beg the help of God in all our needs! Although grace is indispensably necessary for us, nevertheless God is not bound to grant it to us. If God were bound to grant us grace then it would be grace no longer, but mere justice, for grace means a gratuitous gift. By original sin we have lost all right to grace, and, although our Lord Jesus Christ in dying upon the cross reopened for us the source of grace, it was only through a pure effect of His goodness and mercy. Without derogating from His justice He could have permitted us to live and die in the abyss of perdition, into which we had voluntarily cast ourselves. Thus, all the graces which come to us from heaven, we owe to the merits of Jesus Christ; through the openings of His adorable wounds they flow upon us, and it is to His sacred wounds that we should always have recourse.

VIII. But God's love and goodness towards us in this regard is admirable. Although He is not bound to grant us grace, still He refuses

it to nobody, not even to pagans. There is not one single man upon earth to whom He does not grant all the graces necessary for salvation. It is with the Heavenly Father as with the sun which lightens and warms the whole earth with its rays. Jesus Christ died for all men, He desires all to be saved, and He allows us all to share in His merits. But if God grants His grace to everybody, He does so especially to you, my brethren, whom He caused to be born in the bosom of the true Church, who have zealous priests to instruct you, to confer the sacraments, and to bring you back into the way of salvation, if you have had the misfortune to go astray; to you who are, in one word, privileged children of His providence. But since God is so generous towards you, He will also demand a strict account at the last day. The Holy Ghost declares that *the more we have received the more will be asked from us*. The useless servant was thrown into exterior darkness, because he did not employ the talent which his master had intrusted to him, that is, because he did not coöperate with grace.

IX. The abuse of grace is a sin, and greatly endangers salvation. Grace is the fruit of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. When our divine Saviour wished to merit grace for us, He had to spill His blood for us upon a cross. The least grace has cost Him more than the creation of the universe. What does the sinner do who abuses grace? He renders useless the sufferings and death of his God; he tramples under foot His adorable blood. Is this not the blackest ingratitude?

Was it not this abuse of grace of which the Lord complained when He said: *Woe to thee, Corozain! Woe to thee, Bethsaida! For if in Tyre and in Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes* (Luke x. 13); that is to say: Woe to you, sinners, who persevere in the way of perdition, who refuse to convert yourselves and who abuse my grace! Because the judgment which you shall have to undergo some day will be dreadful; and if you forsake the Lord, the Lord will forsake you in turn.

*I have done*, He says, *all I could to heal Babylon from its evils, but it did not wish to profit by my cares. I shall, therefore, abandon her to her faith, and I shall not remember it any longer, even in the midst of its greatest misfortunes* (Jer. li.). *What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes? And now I will show you what I will do to my*

*vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate, it shall not be pruned and it shall not be digged; but briars and thorns shall come up, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it* (Is. v. 4–6). In these words it is easy to read the history of the sinner whom God has overwhelmed with favors for a long time, and whom He at last abandons to his fate, because he continues to draw no fruit from His favors.

But the most terrible example of the abuse of grace is what we read in the Gospel in regard to the ungrateful city of Jerusalem. One day our Lord being about to enter this city, and foreseeing the little fruit which it would draw from His visit, cried out: *Ah! thou ungrateful and perfidious city, if thou hadst known how to appreciate what could serve thy peace and happiness! But thou hast persisted in thy blindness and I announce to thee that thy end is near, and that the time shall come when thy enemies shall surround thee, and cast a trench about thee, and compass thee to the ground, and straiten thee on every side. They shall beat thee to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone; because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation* (Luke xix. 42–44). This prophecy was literally fulfilled; Jerusalem was totally destroyed, and its inhabitants dispersed among all the nations of the earth.

Ah! my brethren, let us fear lest the same punishment may befall us; let us fear lest God, tired of our lukewarmness and our indifference, may withdraw Himself from us and permit us to fall into hardness of heart and final impenitence. Such are the deplorable consequences of the abuse of grace.

Let each one examine his conscience and see what fruit he has drawn from all the graces he has received, from the many good inspirations sent him by God, from so many confessions and communions, from jubilees and missions. O my God, I acknowledge that I have profited very little by Thy goodness and mercy towards me. Alas! how many pagans and infidels would have become saints if they would have had the hundredth part of the graces that were granted to me! Pardon, O my God, my malice and my ingratitude! In future it shall be different, and if Thou deignest to grant me Thy favors, I shall try to profit better by them and to be a devoted and obedient child. Amen.

## II. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacraments in General

In my last instruction I spoke of grace, of its nature, its different kinds, its necessity, and the obligation of coöperating with it. To-day I shall speak of the means of which God makes use to confer grace upon us, that is, the sacraments. If there are so many Christians who have little respect for the sacraments and who rarely receive them, whence does it come, if it is not because they do not know the value of these helps to salvation? The sacraments are like so many channels through which grace flows into our souls.

I. A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to give grace to the soul. An *outward sign* is anything that falls under our senses indicative of something that does not fall under the senses. Thus, a word is the sign of a thought, and smoke is the indication of fire.

In each sacrament there is something outward which can be seen, heard, or touched. In baptism the water poured on the head of the child, and the words which the minister pronounces at the same time, constitute the outward sign. In confirmation, it is chrism and the words of the bishop. In the Holy Eucharist, it is the bread and the wine, and the words: This is My body; this is My blood. These outward signs represent to us or make known to us the inner and invisible effects which the sacraments produce in the soul.

II. In each sacrament three things are essential: the matter, the form, and the intention of the minister.

The *matter* is the sensible thing, the action, as the water in baptism, the holy chrism in confirmation, and the bread and wine in the Eucharist.

The *form* consists of the words which the minister pronounces: I baptize thee, I confirm thee, This is My body, this is My blood.

The *intention* or the will which the minister has to administer a sacrament.

These three things are absolutely necessary in each sacrament, and if one is wanting the sacrament is null.

Besides these three indispensable conditions, there are in the administration of a sacrament what we call the *ceremonies*, that is,

certain exterior rites, certain practices or prayers which the Church has established to inspire the faithful with more respect and devotion. The ceremonies form only the accessory part, and they can be shortened or even omitted in case of necessity.

III. All the sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ, and it is very evident that they could only be instituted by Him. Indeed, God alone being the author and master of grace, He alone can give to exterior signs the virtue to produce grace. This is an article of faith, because the holy Council of Trent condemns any one who would maintain the contrary (Sess. III. 1). Jesus Christ is not only the author of the sacraments, but He is also their first and principal minister, for the priest who administers them is only the medium and the representative of the Saviour; and far from acting in his own name, he acts only in the name of Christ. Thus, as St. Augustine said: Whether Peter baptizes, whether Paul baptizes, whether Judas baptizes, it is always Jesus Christ who baptizes. Whence it follows that the unworthiness of the minister cannot affect either the validity of the sacraments or its efficacy. A minister, in the state of mortal sin, would render himself guilty of an awful profanation if he administer the sacraments in such an unfortunate state; but the sacraments will not be less good and efficacious for the persons who receive them.

IV. The sacraments which Christ has instituted are seven in number, namely: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. This is also an article of faith defined by the Church, and he would sin grievously who would maintain that there are more than seven or less than seven. These seven sacraments are represented by the seven stars which St. John saw in the right of the Son of Man (Apoc. I. 16).

Why did Christ fix the number of sacraments at seven, and why did he not institute a greater or a lesser number? To this question, my brethren, I could answer, first, that this is the secret of His wisdom and that we do not need to know it; nevertheless, the Catechism of the Council of Trent gives us a very beautiful and very convincing reason for this, which is derived from the relation which exists between the natural life and supernatural life. Seven things, says the Catechism, are necessary for man, in order that he may live and employ usefully his life, either for himself, or for others. He must be born; he must grow; he must nourish himself; he must use remedies to recover his

health when he has lost it; he must regain his strength when it has been weakened by some infirmity; there must be magistrates to govern society; finally, mankind must perpetuate itself through the legitimate generation of children.

It is the same in spiritual life. As we are born in a state of death we are in need of a new birth, and it is baptism which gives us this. After the regeneration in the baptismal font, we are still weak like a new-born child; confirmation gives us strength and the growth which the soul needs. The Holy Eucharist is the food of the soul; penance heals it from the wounds which sin causes; extreme unction procures to it the help necessary in the times of illness; holy orders create spiritual magistrates, that is, priests; and marriage gives children to the Church.

How great is the goodness of God towards men, and how His wisdom shines forth in all His works!

V. Why did Jesus Christ institute the sacraments? There are several reasons: 1st. To assist the weakness and infirmity of our nature which hardly can elevate itself to the knowledge of spiritual things except by the means of material or sensible things.

2d. To remove from our mind all doubt, all perplexity, in giving to us an easy and sure mark which permits to us to recognize whether we have received the grace and whether the fruits of the passion have been applied to us.

3d. To unite all the members of His Church by exterior bonds, the practice of the same worship, and to distinguish the worthy faithful from those who are not.

4th. The principal reason why our Saviour has instituted the sacraments is to sanctify men, that is, to confer upon them the graces which they need for their eternal salvation.

Indeed, my brethren, and this is something very worthy of remark, the sacraments are not only exterior signs or symbols of grace, but they also operate what they signify, that is, that they produce through themselves and through their own power the graces which sanctify men, *provided that no obstacle is put to them.* Here lies the essential difference between the sacraments, on the one hand, and prayer or good works, on the other. Prayer and good works, however good and perfect they may be, cannot produce grace, they can obtain it for us from the divine mercy, whilst the sacraments produce grace by themselves, as the sun produces both light and heat. I have added, provided

no obstacle is put them. For it is with the grace of the sacraments as with the rays of the sun which cannot lighten a dark place, unless some opening is made, or as with the earth which produces only in so far as it is well prepared.

VI. But the sacraments do not all produce grace in the same manner. Some give us sanctifying grace, when we have lost it; and others increase it in us. The sacraments which give sanctifying grace are baptism and penance; baptism in effacing original sin, and penance in remitting both the mortal and venial sins which we have committed since baptism. These sacraments are called *sacraments of the dead*, not that one must be physically dead when receiving them, because, then, they could do us no good, but because they restore the life of grace to those whose soul is dead through sin. The other sacraments do not give sanctifying grace, because the recipient must be in the state of sanctifying grace before receiving them, else he commits a sacrilege. But although they do not give sanctifying grace to us, they increase it in our soul, render us more agreeable to God, and make us attain a higher degree of holiness and justice. This is why they are called *sacraments of the living*. These sacraments are: confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, extreme unction, holy orders, and matrimony.

Besides sanctifying grace, the sacraments produce also certain actual graces which God has promised to grant to those who receive them with the proper dispositions. These are what we call *sacramental graces*, because they correspond to the nature of each sacrament, and are the proper and specific effects thereof. Thus, confirmation confers the particular graces to profess and defend the faith when the occasion requires it; extreme unction strengthens the sick against the pains of illness and the temptations of the devil at the hour of death; holy orders to fulfill in a worthy manner sacred functions and to labor with zeal for the salvation of souls; matrimony, to sanctify the conjugal union, to assist married people to perform the duties and to bear in a Christian manner the trials of their state, and to raise their children in the fear of God.

VII. What benefits, what a treasure for a Christian soul are the sacraments of the Church! And how guilty would we be if they did not excite in our souls the most lively sentiments of gratitude, of respect, and of love! And, nevertheless, we have not mentioned all the precious advantages which they contain.

Apart from grace, of which the sacraments are the fruitful source, there are three sacraments which produce another hardly less wonderful effect, and which is an indelible character, that is, a distinctive mark or a seal, which can never be blotted out, imprinted upon the soul of the one who receives them, and distinguishing him eternally from those who have not received it. These three sacraments are baptism, confirmation, and holy orders. Baptism imprints upon the soul the character of Christian and child of God; confirmation, that of soldier of Jesus Christ; and holy orders, that of minister of God. These various characters are like so many noble decorations that shine upon our breast. Those who have received only baptism have received only one, the confirmed have two, and priests have all three. So, also, in the court of a king there are three sorts of persons; subjects who serve the king, soldiers and officers who combat for him, magistrates and ministers who govern his states, and who all are distinguished from one another by costumes or by different marks of honor. The three characters which these sacraments imprint shall form in heaven a kind of hierarchy, the first class of which will be composed of those who have only the seal of baptism; the second of those who shall have that of baptism and confirmation; and the most elevated, of those who shall be adorned with the three seals of baptism, confirmation, and of holy orders. What a happiness and a glory for those who, through their virtues and merits, can present them pure and spotless at the judgment seat of God! But as these characters shall be beautiful and honorable for the elect in heaven, so much shall they be the shame and the disgrace of the damned. In hell, the Christians who will be marked with the seal of baptism shall be in much worse state than even the pagans and unbelievers who did not receive it,—those who shall wear the seal of confirmation will be doubly punished for having abused the graces of baptism and confirmation, and these two characters shall be for them as two scars of ignominy. What a shame and what chastisements for those priests who would be so unfortunate as to be damned and to soil the threefold character with which they were honored!

Such is, my brethren, the second effect produced in us by the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, and which they produce independently from all other effects. A character of honor for some, a character of shame for others, but an indelible character for all, and which shall last as long as eternity itself; hence it is that these

three sacraments can be received but once. God grant that we may always preserve without stain the characters imprinted upon our souls, and that at the moment of death we may find ourselves all marked with the seal of the blessed! Amen.

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## III. INSTRUCTION

### On Baptism

Baptism is the first and most necessary of all the sacraments. Without baptism we have no right to receive any other sacrament, and without baptism we cannot enter heaven.

Although you have all received baptism already, I shall still speak to you about it with certain particulars, because when you were baptized you were not old enough to understand and to appreciate the dignity of this sacrament, nor the excellence of the grace which it confers, nor the effects which it produces in the soul, nor the obligations which you contracted.

I. "Baptism is a sacrament which effaces original sin and makes us children of God and of the Church."

1st. Baptism is a sacrament, because it contains the three essential conditions. In the preceding instruction, you have been told that a sacrament is an outward sign instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ to give grace to the soul. Now, baptism is a sensible sign which consists in the ablution of the head of the child, joined with the words: *I baptize thee*, etc. This outward sign *was instituted by Christ* when He said to His apostles; *Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. xxviii. 19). It was also instituted to give grace to our soul, because it has the power of effacing sin and of opening heaven to us.

2d. Baptism is a sacrament *which remits original sin* which we have contracted in Adam, our first father.

In the state of nature, that is, from the fall of Adam until Moses, there existed, as most of the theologians teach, a remedy to efface this

original sin. This consisted in some exterior ceremony by which a person manifested his faith in the promised Messiah. Under the law of Moses, that is, from the call of Abraham until the coming of Christ, according to the opinion of most Doctors of the Church, it was circumcision for male children, who, according to the law, should be presented in the temple the eighth day after their birth.

Under the law of grace, it is baptism which alone has the power to purify the soul from original sin and to restore to it the life of grace, of which it was robbed through the disobedience of our first parents. This is the first and most wonderful effect of this ineffable sacrament. Before receiving it, you were, in the eyes of God, only children of wrath and malediction; the devil dwelt in your heart, you were condemned to eternal reprobation. But hardly had the baptismal water flowed over your forehead than you were regenerated, you were born to a spiritual life, the Holy Ghost descended into your hearts, and the gates of heaven were reopened to you. What a wonderful change! What a precious grace!

Not only is original sin effaced by baptism, but also all the other sins we might have committed before receiving it, provided, however, we receive it with the necessary dispositions. Thus, suppose a man is baptized at the age of twenty, thirty, fifty, or even eighty years, as often happens among the pagans or infidels,—all the actual sins which he has committed until then, however grievous and numerous they may be, are entirely remitted along with original sin. It is sufficient to have the proper dispositions. If these dispositions are wanting, the person baptized would, it is true, receive the character of Christian; but the other effects of the sacrament, namely, the infusion of sanctifying grace and the remission of both original and actual sin, would be suspended until the recipient was actuated with the sentiments of faith, hope, charity, and contrition, which God requires in baptism of adults.

Baptism does still more than remit sin, it remits also the temporal punishment due to sin, punishment to be borne either in this world or in the world to come. If a grown-up person, newly baptized, should happen to die before having committed new sins, he would enter heaven at once, without passing through purgatory. There is here a notable difference between baptism and penance; for, after having received the sacrament of penance, there remains for you, ordinarily, to undergo a temporal punishment, hence the penance which the

priest imposes upon you; whilst baptism purifies the soul entirely from all its stains, remits all its debts to the divine justice, and opens heaven to it immediately.

3d. Baptism makes us *children of God and of the Church.*

It makes us *children of God*, by giving to us an entirely new life, a supernatural and divine life, in giving us the right to call God our Father, in making us partakers of all His graces, and the heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

It makes us *children of the Church*, by incorporating us with it, and by making us partakers of all its treasures, such as the sacraments, the holy sacrifice of the mass, indulgences, prayers, and good works of all and each of its members.

Did you ever reflect upon the dignity and excellence of this sacrament and on the wonderful effects it produces in our soul? If a great king were to select one among you and adopt him as his own child, to make him the heir of his kingdom, to elevate him on the throne, how happy would he not esteem himself! And what would not be his gratitude for such a great benefit! Such ought to be our sentiments in regard to the grace of baptism and they should be still more lively and ardent because all the kingdoms of this world are nothing in comparison with the kingdom of heaven. Such were the sentiments of the saints. St. Louis, the pious and illustrious King of France, often said to his courtiers that he preferred his character as child of God which he received in baptism to all the crowns of the earth.

Besides the graces which baptism confers upon us, it imprints on the soul an indelible character, that glorious character which distinguishes us from the pagans and infidels, which makes of the Christian people *a chosen race, a holy nation* (II. Pet. II. 9); that royal and sacerdotal character which not only elevates us above earthly kings, by making us children of the King of kings, but consecrates us in some sort as priests of the Most High, by initiating us into the most holy mysteries; that divine character which imprints upon our forehead the feature of the Deity; that immortal character which nothing can ever destroy, and which shall be eternally our glory or our shame, according as we shall have fulfilled well or ill our duties as Christians.

O Christians, recognize your dignity, be thankful to the Lord every day for the grandeur to which he has raised you, and may nothing ever make you disown this dignity, neither the violence of

passions, nor the temptations of the devil, nor the seductions of the world.

II. Is the sacrament of baptism necessary for salvation? Yes, it is absolutely necessary, for Jesus Christ has said that *unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of God* (John III. 5). Such has always been the teaching of the Church, and we are not permitted to have the least doubt about this.

Pagans, infidels, and Jews, not receiving baptism, are not born again in Jesus Christ and are, consequently, excluded from heaven. Let us not accuse God of partiality and injustice. God is the master of His gifts, He does not owe eternal happiness to any one, and instead of seeking to sound the depths of His ways and to penetrate the secrets of His wisdom, let us thank Him for His benefits towards us, and let us always be grateful for His infinite goodness and mercy. But the unbaptized are not absolutely excluded from heaven, and if they faithfully practice the natural law engraved in their hearts, God will find means to bring them to the true faith, and give them the grace of baptism, and He might even work a miracle and send an angel from heaven to baptize them rather than abandon them. Such is the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquin, one of the greatest doctors of the Church. As to those children who die without baptism, it is very probable that they shall not have to suffer the frightful torments reserved for the damned, nor the pains of purgatory. We may even take for granted that they enjoy a sort of natural happiness, but never shall they see God and partake of the felicity of the elect. It is a great misfortune for these poor little creatures to be deprived of the sight of God. How guilty are, therefore, those parents who, by their negligence, allow them to die before having received this sacrament! As soon as a child is born, the parents should hasten to bring it to the Church to have it baptized. In some dioceses parents incur excommunication if, without previous permission, they fail to bring their children for baptism within eight days.

Is baptism so necessary that it cannot be supplied by any means? No, my brethren; God in His mercy has furnished all the means necessary for salvation. Baptism can be supplied in two ways; either by desire for baptism or by martyrdom. The desire for baptism must be accompanied by a lively faith and a perfect charity. Thus, a pagan, a Jew, or an infidel would be saved, without baptism, provided that he

had the following dispositions: a desire to convert himself to Christianity, a perfect love of God, and an ardent desire to receive baptism. Martyrdom consists in giving one's life for Jesus Christ. This was very common during the persecutions of the first three centuries of the Church. The first of these baptisms is called *baptism of desire*, and the second, which is the most glorious of all, is the *baptism of blood*. Such was the baptism of the Holy Innocents, whom the Church honors by a public worship because they were put to death by Herod in hatred of the Saviour.

III. Who has the power to administer baptism? In ordinary cases, the bishops and priests are the ministers of baptism. Deacons can baptize, but only after having received permission from the bishop. These alone can baptize solemnly, that is, with the ceremonies of the Church. But, in case of necessity, any one has the power to baptize. Baptism being of such an absolute necessity, God wills that it be easily received in order that no one may be deprived of this indispensable means of salvation. Thus, when a child is in danger of death, and there is no time to call a priest, any person present, man or woman, Christian or infidel, Catholic or heretic, may baptize it. It is sufficient, in this case, to observe faithfully what is prescribed by the Church, and to have the intention to do what the Church does. But if there are several persons present, this is the order that ought to be followed: if there is a priest or some ecclesiastic present, he ought to administer baptism; a Catholic should be preferred to a non-Catholic; a man to a woman, except the woman is better instructed than the man; and any one should be preferred before the parents of the child. But a father or mother may baptize the child in case no one else is present. If it is doubtful whether the child is alive, it should be baptized conditionally, "If thou art alive." . . . In case there is any doubt of the validity of the first baptism, the words: "If thou art not baptized" . . . should be used. If the child survives, it should be brought to the Church that the ceremonies of baptism may be supplied.

IV. Every Christian should know how to administer baptism. Natural water, that is, spring or rain water, should be used, but no artificial water, such as water distilled from flowers, herbs, fruits, or corrupted water, such as wash water. Blessed water should be preferred if it can be had.

The water should be poured three times in the form of a cross over the head of the person to be baptized, and *at the same time* the words

of baptism should be distinctly pronounced: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." These words must be pronounced in the correct order and while pouring the water. The same person who pours the water must also pronounce the words. All these conditions are prescribed under pain of nullifying the sacrament.

The water must not only moisten the hair or the covering upon the child, but it must touch the skin.

In baptizing a child in danger of death, a person must be careful not to become excited. He should recollect himself for a few moments beforehand, and baptize it only once, and do it with the intention which the Church has in administering baptism.

Solemn baptism, as administered by the priests at the baptismal font, is an interesting ceremony, and will form the subject of the next instruction.

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## IV. INSTRUCTION

### On Baptism (*Concluded*)

I. The ceremonies of baptism are fourteen in number and are supposed to be of apostolic institution. They are all of a mysterious signification.

*1st Ceremony.*— The child that is presented for baptism stops at the door of the Church, to show that, being subject to the reign of the devil on account of original sin, it is unworthy to enter the holy place. The priest then asks it what is its desire, and the godfather or godmother, in the name of the child, begs for the grace of baptism. The priest then breathes three times on the child's face, in order to show thereby that, as at the creation of man, his soul was infused by the breath of God, so, also, the child is about to receive a new life through the breath of grace; and just as through the breathing of Jesus Christ and the apostles the devil was driven out of the possessed, so, also, it is through the breathing of the Holy Ghost that the infernal spirit will be driven out from the heart of the child that is to be baptized.

*2d Ceremony.*—The second ceremony consists in giving to the child a name of a saint; to offer to it a model upon earth and an intercessor with God in heaven. The parents and the godfathers should choose this name. This name should be the name of a saint, and it is proper to take the name of a saint of the New Testament in order not to imitate the Jews who choose only names from the Old Testament. Do not choose the names of the great men of the world, nor funny names from storybooks. Let the name be that of some apostle, martyr or confessor of the Church.

*3d Ceremony.*—The priest makes the sign of the cross on the shoulders, on the forehead, and on the breast of the child; on the shoulders, to show that a Christian must carry the cross of Jesus Christ; on the forehead, to show that he must never be ashamed of the sign of the cross; on the breast, to show that he must love the cross with all his heart.

*4th Ceremony.*—The priest puts his hand on the head of the child, to signify that God will soon become its master and to take possession of its whole being, and that in future its body, soul, and all its faculties must be consecrated to Him and devoted to His service.

*5th Ceremony.*—The priest puts a few grains of blessed salt into the mouth of the child, to signify that all its actions and all its words must be regulated by wisdom, discretion, and prudence, of which salt is an emblem.

*6th Ceremony.*—The child is taken into the Church to the baptismal font, where the godparents recite, in its name, the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer, to show that the Church receives only those into her bosom who have the faith and the spirit of prayer.

*7th Ceremony.*—The priest next applies spittle to the nostrils and ears of the child, to imitate the action of Christ when he gave speech and hearing to the man born deaf and dumb, and to signify that the ears of the person baptized must be always open to hear the word of God.

*8th Ceremony.*—On coming to the baptismal font, the priest asks the child three times *whether it renounces Satan, all his pomps and all his works, and whether it is willing to attach itself solely to Jesus Christ;* and only on the affirmative answer of the godparents who promise in the child's name, the priest consents to administer baptism.

*9th Ceremony.*—The priest next anoints the breast and shoulders of the child with the holy oil of Catechumens, to signify that it must

be prepared to combat the enemies of salvation, and to carry with joy the yoke of the Gospel.

*10th Ceremony.*— The priest then requires from the sponsors a public profession of faith in the principal articles of the Creed; *Do you believe in God the Father Almighty . . . Do you believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son . . . Do you believe in the Holy Catholic Church?*

It is only after all these pledges, these unctions and exorcisms, that the priest finally permits the waters of baptism to fall on the head of the child. The water is poured on the head of the child and the solemn words of baptism are pronounced: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

*11th Ceremony.*— After baptism the priest anoints the child on the forehead with holy chrism, to show that as in olden times the prophets, the kings, and the priests were anointed, so, also, by baptism, the child is anointed prophet, priest, and king; prophet, through the lights which faith gives to him; priest, to offer to God the continual sacrifice of his body and soul; king, to subdue his passions and to rule them as master.

*12th Ceremony.*— The priest then covers the child with a white linen which represents the white garment given in the primitive Church to the newly baptized on Holy Saturday, and which they wore during the entire week of Easter. This white garment represents the innocence or state of grace conferred by the baptismal water, and the priest in giving it exhorts the child to keep it pure to the end of his life, in order that he may appear in the same spotless robe before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

*13th Ceremony.*— The priest next places a lighted candle in the hand of the child, to signify that he must not walk in the way of darkness, but in the light of a pure and holy life.

*14th Ceremony.*— Lastly, the priest gives the child his blessing: "Go in peace, and may the Lord be with thee."

II. Such are the touching ceremonies of baptism, full of meaning and well calculated to impress us with the dignity of the sacrament.

The promises made in baptism are all-important, but since the child is not in a condition to answer for itself, the sponsors answer for it. In its name, they renounce the devil and all his works and pomps. To renounce Satan is to renounce the devil, the enemy of man's salvation, to promise to abandon his service forever. To renounce the works of Satan is to renounce sin, the great and only evil

of the world — sin, the work of the devil and the enemy of God. To renounce the pomps of Satan is to renounce the vain and seductive glitter of sinful pleasures and the false splendors of worldly honors. It is to renounce the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Ah! my brethren, from the first moment of your baptism you ought to have belonged entirely to God; and perhaps the greatest number of your days has been passed in the forgetfulness of God, in the contempt of His sacred laws, and under the power of the devil, His most bitter enemy. Ah! if you have been unfaithful to the promises of baptism in the past, renew those sacred and solemn engagements, and be more faithful in future.

At the time of your baptism the promises were made by your sponsors in your name, but, at the time of your first communion, you renewed these baptismal promises for yourselves and relieved your sponsors of all further responsibility. A fervent Christian will renew his baptismal vows often during his life, especially on the anniversary of his baptism, after a general confession, at a spiritual retreat, during a jubilee, and on other occasions of his life.

III. Sponsors in baptism are those who present the child to be baptized, and who answer to the priest and to the Church for the child. The custom of having sponsors at the baptism of children dates back to the apostolic times, and it is mentioned by St. Dionysius. The Church requires sponsors in the baptism of infants as a security and a pledge for the fidelity to the promises of baptism, and, as their name indicates, the sponsors answer for the child and take upon themselves the responsibility of seeing that it is instructed in the Christian religion. Sponsors are also called godparents, godfathers or godmothers, and, as that name sufficiently indicates, they become the spiritual fathers and mothers of their godchildren and are obliged to see that the children are instructed in the faith and raised to a true Christian life, if the parents of the children neglect this duty. The responsibility of godparents ceases when the children renew their baptismal vows at the age of discretion or at first communion.

How many there are who assume the title of godparents without knowing the duties and the responsibilities attached to it?

It is important to choose good sponsors in baptism. One who has not attained the age of reason, or a non-Catholic, or a Catholic who is ignorant of the truths of his religion, cannot be a sponsor in baptism.

No Catholic of bad life should ever be chosen as sponsor, for he would be the first to scandalize the godchild whom he has promised to instruct and guard in the true way of salvation.

Sponsors in baptism contract a spiritual relationship or affinity with their godchildren, and this affinity is acknowledged by the Church, for it forbids marriage between godchildren and godparents. The Church allows only one godfather and one godmother to the child in baptism, but a godfather for a boy and a godmother for a girl is sufficient.

A good Christian mother, who has given birth to a child, will repair to the Church as soon as possible, to thank God for her happy delivery, to offer to God her new-born child, and to receive the blessing of the priest. This is not a precept, but it is a very pious and ancient custom. It is an imitation of what was practiced by the Jewish people, according to the law of purification established by Moses. The blessed Virgin herself, although she was not bound to conform to this law, because she had contracted no stain in childbirth, wished to submit herself to it, and it is quite becoming for a Christian mother to imitate this beautiful example.

Remember the precious graces which you have received in baptism, and never lose sight of the solemn engagements which you have contracted towards God, which will, one day, be either your condemnation or your glory. Amen.

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## V. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrament of Confirmation

I. Confirmation is a sacrament in which we receive the Holy Ghost with the abundance of His graces to make us strong and perfect Christians.

Confirmation is a sacrament, because it is an outward sign instituted by Jesus Christ to give grace to the soul. This outward sign consists in the unction with holy chrism which is made on the forehead and in the words which accompany it: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in

the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.» The unction is the matter of the sacrament, according to the common opinion of theologians; the words constitute the form of the sacrament. This outward sign has been instituted by Jesus Christ, because in the Acts of the Apostles we read that the apostles confirmed the new Christians: *Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost* (Acts VIII. 17). They could not have done this, if this sacrament had not been instituted by their Divine Master, because only God can attach to material and sensible objects the virtue to produce grace.

Moreover, confirmation was instituted to give grace to the soul. Confirmation gives us the Holy Ghost with the abundance of His graces to make us strong and perfect Christians. In baptism, indeed, we also receive this sanctifying spirit who, in cleansing us from original sin, made us the friends of God and temples of the Deity; but in confirmation we receive Him with greater abundance of graces. In baptism we are regenerated, we are born to a spiritual life, we receive the life of grace; in confirmation we are made strong, confirmed in this new life. After baptism we are still feeble in virtue, like children who have little strength to walk; after confirmation we are strong, robust, and capable of resisting even the strongest trials; our faith is enlivened, and we are made strong in the grace received at baptism to practice the maxims of Christianity. This is why this sacrament is called confirmation.

II. The first effect which confirmation produces in us is *to give us the Holy Ghost with the abundance of His graces.* These particular graces, which we call gifts, are seven in number: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and the fear of God.

*Wisdom* detaches us from the goods and pleasures of this world, to make us long solely for the things of God.

*Understanding* elevates our mind and assists it to understand and appreciate the wonders of faith, as well as all the truths revealed, at least as far as we are capable.

*Counsel* disposes us to choose, in all things, the better part with a view solely to our sanctification, and directs us in the choice of what can most contribute to God's glory.

*Fortitude* upholds us in dangers and temptations, and assists us to triumph over the obstacles in the way of salvation which daily present themselves.

*Knowledge* teaches us to distinguish good from evil, and engraves the law of God deep in our hearts.

*Piety* makes us love prayer, the sacred word of God, and the sacraments, and moves us to fulfill our religious duties with zeal and fervor.

Finally, the *fear of God* penetrates us with a holy fear for the judgments of God, and disposes us to avoid carefully all that might render us displeasing to Him.

God has often manifested by miracles the extraordinary coming of the Holy Ghost into the soul through the sacrament of confirmation. We have a striking example when on Pentecost the apostles received the gift of tongues, prophecies, and miracles. These wonderful examples were so frequent in the primitive Church, that Simon the Magician, who was astonished at them, offered money to the apostles, in order that they might communicate to him the power of working wonders, imagining that they were in possession of some secret which was unknown to him. But St. Peter answered him with indignation: *Keep thy money thyself to perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money* (Acts VIII. 20).

These wonderful gifts which the Holy Ghost spreads in our souls, at confirmation, render us *perfect Christians*, by aiding us to advance more and more in virtue, by giving to us particular strength to practice religion even in the most painful circumstances; and by filling us with vigor and courage to confess and defend our faith even at the risk of our lives. There are, indeed, circumstances where public confession of one's faith is necessary, as in times of persecution, or in the company of unbelievers, or of heretics who blaspheme and outrage the true faith. Not to declare oneself as a Christian and as a child of the Church, in such circumstances, would, in some degree, be disowning our belief. In confirmation, we receive the strength and courage which enables us to despise mockery and sarcasm of the impious, the threats of the wicked, and even the torments to which we might be exposed. The Christians of the early Church have given us the most glorious examples of fortitude. In vain did the Roman emperors tempt them by most magnificent promises, or try to frighten them by most terrible threats; in vain did they condemn them to exile or death; these fearless Christians remained firm in their faith and went rejoicing to their death, full of courage and hope in God.

The second effect of confirmation is the indelible character which it imprints on the soul. This character is like a seal by which, after

having been made children of God through baptism, we become soldiers of Jesus Christ, and are enrolled in His sacred militia, to combat His enemies and to defend His holy religion. This sacred and divine seal will shine eternally on our forehead for our honor or for our shame, according as we shall have made a good or bad use of the graces of this sacrament.

III. Confirmation imparts to the soul the Holy Ghost with the plenitude of His graces, and therefore this sacrament can be administered only by the bishops, who alone possess the plenitude of the priesthood. We read in Holy Scripture that the apostles had the power to confirm. When the Samaritans had been baptized by the deacon St. Philip, they were confirmed by the apostles St. Peter and St. John, and the Christians of Ephesus were confirmed by St. Paul (Acts VIII. 15).

IV. Since the sacrament of confirmation confers such great graces, it is the duty of every Christian to receive it. God could not institute such an abundant source of graces without at the same time obliging us to have recourse to it. Undoubtedly, it is not as necessary as baptism, without which no one can be saved. But it is necessary, as far as God's precept is concerned, and it would be a grievous sin to neglect to receive it. Pope Benedict XIV. formally declared so in his bull, *Etsi pastoralis Romani*, and all the Doctors of the Church teach the same. When a person attains the age required, he must take the first occasion to receive it, and parents and masters would render themselves guilty of grievous sin, if they did not have their children or their servants confirmed, if they can conveniently do so.

V. There is no definite law as to the age at which the sacrament of confirmation should be received. In the early ages of the Church, it was administered immediately after baptism, even to the little children, on account of the persecutions which raged in those times. The custom of the Church in the present day is to confirm only those who have attained the age of reason, in order that, being more instructed, they receive this sacrament with greater respect and greater profit. The Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches that it is best to wait until about the age of twelve years, that is, about the time of first communion.

VI. The manner of administering confirmation is as follows: The bishop spreads his hands over those that are to be confirmed and invokes the Holy Ghost to come down upon them with His gifts. This

imposition of hands, practiced by the apostles themselves, signifies the power of God that ought to protect the souls of those to be confirmed, and protect them against the attacks and snares of the enemy. According to several theologians this imposition of hands is an essential part of the sacrament, and none of those who are to be confirmed should be absent from it. After the imposition of hands, the bishop makes a sign of the cross with chrism on the forehead of each of those to be confirmed, saying, at the same time: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The chrism used in confirmation is a mixture of olive oil and balsam, consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday. This matter has been chosen by Jesus Christ, in preference to all others, because the oil, by the property which it has of sweetening and strengthening, and the balsam, by its good odor, represent the effects which confirmation produces in our soul, by calming our passions, strengthening us against temptations, and animating us to spread everywhere the good odor of virtue. The bishop makes the unction *on the forehead*, because on the forehead is revealed either shame or fear, and because we ought to have neither shame nor fear to confess our faith as Christians; and he makes the unction in the *form of a cross*, to point out that, far from being ashamed of the cross, we ought, on the contrary, to look upon it as our most glorious trophy of honor and glory. Finally, the bishop gives a slight blow on the cheek of the one who is confirmed, to teach him that he must be prepared to suffer all sorts of injuries for Jesus Christ. Our religion, my brethren, is a religion of humiliation and of sacrifice. The life of our divine model was one of long suffering, one continual bearing of the cross. If we wish to be Christians, we must accustom ourselves, even in early life, to bear injuries and contempt with patience.

VII. Preparation for the reception of the sacrament of confirmation includes a preparation of the body and a preparation of the soul.

As regards the preparation of the body, those who are to be confirmed should be decently and modestly dressed, they should have their forehead well washed, they should keep a becoming posture during the reception of the sacrament, and, if possible, they should be fasting from the midnight previous.

As regards the interior preparation, those who are to be confirmed should be sufficiently instructed and should be in the state of grace, and

they should be recollected during the reception of the sacrament and pray for the reception of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In conclusion I would say that if there are any among you who have neglected to receive the sacrament of confirmation, they should wait no longer; for the longer they defer it, the more guilty they become. All children who have attained the age of discretion should keep themselves ready to profit by the first visit of the bishop, to receive confirmation. Many of those who have already received this sacrament ought to humble themselves on account of their weakness and cowardice. They do not coöperate with the graces of the Holy Ghost, and they do not fulfill their obligations as a Christian.

Let those who have been unfaithful in their Christian duties and who have bowed before human respect, humble themselves before the Lord, pray to Him to renew in their hearts the spirit of strength and piety: *Confirma hoc, Deus, quod operatus est in nobis;* and to give them grace to behave in future as true soldiers of Jesus Christ: *Sicut bonus miles Christi* (II. Tim. II. 3).

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## VI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist

I. The word *Eucharist* signifies grace, or thanks. The Blessed Eucharist is so called, because when our Saviour instituted it, He gave thanks to His Father, and because, when the sacrifice of the Mass is offered, it is the most agreeable thank offering that can be made.

This sacrament is designated in Holy Scripture, and in the ecclesiastical authors, under various other names which give us to understand its many excellences and its various effects. It is called: —

1st. The *Most Holy Sacrament*, because it is the greatest, the most holy, and the most august of all the sacraments. The other sacraments produce grace, but this contains and communicates to us the author of all grace.

2d. The *sacrament of the altar*, because the Eucharist is consecrated upon the altar, and because it is preserved on the altar to be distributed to the faithful.

3d. The *sacred host*, because the Eucharist contains Jesus Christ, who is the host or victim immolated for the salvation of the world.

4th. The *living bread*, the *bread of the angels*, the *bread of the children*, because it is the best nourishment of our souls, which only the children of God have the right to receive, and which they should receive with the purity of angels.

5th. It is called *communion*, on account of the intimate manner in which it unites us with Jesus Christ; the holy table on which a heavenly and divine banquet is served.

6th. It is called the *holy viaticum*, because it is given to the dying to assist them in their last journey from time to eternity.

II. As the sacrament of the Eucharist is such an excellent sacrament, God desired that it should be announced to men by figures long before it was instituted. The principal figures are: —

1st. The *tree of life*, the fruit of which was to give immortality to those who eat of it in the earthly paradise.

2d. The *bread and the wine*, which Melchisadech offered in sacrifice, and which, later on, was to be the matter of this adorable sacrament.

3d. The *paschal lamb* whose blood protected the houses of the Israelites in Egypt on the passage of the exterminating angel.

4th. The *manna* of the desert, which, during forty years, fell from heaven every morning, for the miraculous nourishment of the people of God.

But as much as light surpasses darkness, and the body surpasses the shadow, so much was the Eucharist to surpass all the figures of the Old Testament.

III. The Eucharist is a *sacrament* which contains really and truly the body, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the species or appearances of bread and wine.

The Eucharist is a sacrament, because it contains all the conditions necessary for a sacrament. The *outward sign* is the appearance of bread and wine; it was *instituted by Jesus Christ* at the Last Supper; and it was instituted *to give grace* to our souls, because it communicates to us the very Author of grace.

We say that this sacrament contains really and truly the body . . . and not that Christ is present in a mystical and figurative manner, as some heretics claim.

IV. To convince ourselves of this fundamental truth, let us study the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel and the language of the apostle St. Paul in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, and let us inquire what tradition has believed and what the Church has decided in this matter.

1st. Jesus said: *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.* The Jews did not understand these words, and they murmured, saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus added: *Amen, amen, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you. For my flesh is meat, indeed; and my blood is drink, indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him* (John VI.).

It was in these words that our Lord promised to institute the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. How could our Saviour have expressed Himself in a clearer and more precise manner? Several of His disciples interpreting these words in a coarse sense, and believing that Jesus Christ was going to give to them His flesh to eat as common flesh, murmured, saying: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" If our Lord had not the intention to speak of a real and substantial presence, He would have hastened to correct their idea; but, on the contrary, He insists only the more on His words. "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life," He added; meaning to say that they must not be understood in their coarse and more carnal sense, but in a supernatural sense, although real, according to the manner of the bodies risen from the dead.

The words of the institution show us in a still clearer and more striking manner the truth of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. It was at the Last Supper, on Holy Thursday, the eve of the passion. Our Lord, after having celebrated the Pasch with His disciples, took bread in His hands, and, having blessed it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples, saying: *Take ye and eat; this is My body.* Then, taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: *Drink ye all of this; for this is My blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins.* And He

added: *Do this in commemoration of Me* (Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28; Luke xxii. 19, 20), that is, do what I have done and do it until the end of time. Could anything be clearer than these expressions: This is My body, this is My blood? What you see in My hands is not bread any longer, but it is My body. What is in this chalice is not wine any longer, but is My blood.

Jesus Christ, being God, foresaw the future, and knew He would be adored as really and substantially present in the Eucharist. Either such was His thought and intention in the words just quoted, or He desired to lead men into an error and cause them to commit an act of idolatry as often as they should adore the august sacrament. But it would be blasphemy to suppose that God would lead us into error. The evidence of these words is so strong that Luther himself, who, as he often said, desired to destroy the belief in the dogma of the real presence, declared that the words: This is My body, this is My blood, were too clear and too definite, and made it impossible for him to attack this mystery.

2d. St. Paul, after speaking of the happiness of those who eat of the table of the Lord, says: *This chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?* (I. Cor. x. 16.)

Then he relates what the Gospel tells of the institution of the Eucharist, and adds: *Therefore, those whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord* (I. Cor. xi. 27–29).

In this divine commentary on the words of the Saviour, how can one, except he is willfully blind, not see the belief of the real presence and the truth of the Eucharistic mystery? Every one of these words of the great apostle is a refutation of heresy.

3d. All tradition is unanimous in upholding this great truth of the real presence. St. Ignatius, in his letter to the faithful in Smyrna, says explicitly that "the Eucharist is the flesh of the Lord, the same flesh that suffered for our sins." St. Justin, in his famous apology, says that "it is flesh and blood of the incarnate Word, the same flesh and blood which became united for the salvation of the world."

"The body is nourished with the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ," says Tertullian, "in order that the soul may be nourished and fattened with the divinity itself." St. Iræneus, St. Cyril, St. Ambrose, St. Chrysostom, and all the Fathers of the Church, affirm the same.

4th. The Church, from the very beginning, has always shown her belief in the real presence, first, by "the breaking of the bread," that is, by partaking in the Holy Eucharist, to which the first Christians were so faithful; and, later, by the different feasts, the divers ceremonies, and the solemn processions which she has established in honor of the Blessed Eucharist.

But the Church has done more than show her faith by the practices of her worship and discipline; she has formally defined this truth in several Councils, and especially in the Council of Trent, where she anathemizes any one who denies that the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, with His soul and divinity, and, consequently, that Jesus Christ Himself is contained truly, really, and substantially in the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist (Sess. XIII. 1).

It is, therefore, an article of faith and a fundamental article, that Jesus Christ is really and substantially present under the sacred species. God has spoken, the apostles, tradition, and the entire Church have declared their belief, and there can no longer be any doubt for the true Catholic. We must believe this great truth, and believe it, not with a languishing faith like that of so many bad Christians who by their conduct belie their belief, but we must believe it with a lively, firm, and immovable faith, absolutely as if, under the appearances of bread and wine, we should see Jesus Christ with our own eyes; and even more firmly, for our eyes might deceive us, while faith can never deceive us. St. Louis, king of France, was once told that in the chapel of the palace, where a saintly priest was saying Mass, our Lord Jesus Christ was visible under the form of a child, and that everybody was hastening to see the miracle. The king was urged to witness the miracle but he answered: "It would be of no use; let those who doubt the real presence go if they wish; as for me, I believe it as firmly as if I were to see it with my own eyes, and I shall not go to see it in order not to lose the merit of my faith."

V. Consider and admire the wonders of the divine power and wisdom which shine forth in the Blessed Eucharist. Hardly are the sacramental words pronounced, when at the same instant the bread and the wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ; the bread

and the wine cease to exist; all that is left is only the form and appearance and whatever there can be perceived by the senses. Jesus Christ is entire under the species of bread and under the species of wine, and He is entire under each of the species contained in the ciborium of any church and of all the churches in the world, without becoming multiplied and without ceasing to be one and the same Christ. If the species be divided into several particles, Jesus Christ remains one and indivisible, because Christ, in His glorious state, is incorruptible and impassible, and He can suffer neither death nor division.

We cannot understand this mystery, but does it therefore follow that it is not true? Who can measure the extent of the divine power? Who can understand how God could create the world by one single word? How He could form the body of Adam out of a little clay? How, in the presence of Pharaoh, He could change the rod of Aaron into a serpent, and at the nuptials of Cana, the water into wine? Nature itself is full of mysteries. Who can understand how a seed thrown into the ground can produce a hundredfold, and how the food we take is changed into our substance?

Wonderful, indeed, is the power of the priest at the altar. He speaks and God obeys; he commands and God comes down from heaven to clothe His Infinity in the sacramental species. The last and lowliest priest in the hierarchy has a power in this regard equal to the Pope himself.

VI. Can one conceive anything comparable to this immense power, to this infinite power given to the priest? Moses commanded the waters of the Red Sea to divide themselves and they obeyed; Josue commanded the sun to stand still in its course and it obeyed; but the priest commands God Himself to descend from His high place in heaven and to conceal Himself under the humble Eucharistic species, and God obeys.

O immense power, O mighty dignity of the priest, which surpasses the dignity of the angels and archangels, the dignity of the Blessed Virgin herself in a certain sense, since it was given neither to the angels, nor to Mary to consecrate the body and blood of Jesus Christ!

VII. Why did Jesus Christ give so much power to priests? It was to enable them to continue the immolation on Mount Calvary, so that He might remain perpetually with us, and even give Himself as food to us; for such was His love for men that He wished to

exhaust the treasures of His power and wisdom, in order to find the means to return to His Heavenly Father without ceasing to be with us.

O ineffable love of God for His creatures! A God gives Himself, His flesh and blood, to be the food of His creatures! Let us prostrate ourselves before the Blessed Sacrament, let us adore and bless the divine Saviour, present in our tabernacles, and say to Him; Yes, O my God, I believe in the real presence of Thy flesh, Thy blood, Thy soul, and Thy divinity, and that Thou residest really and substantially under the Eucharistic veils, as formerly in the womb of Mary, as in the crib of Bethlehem, as upon Mount Calvary. I believe it, O my God, as if I saw Thee with my own eyes. I am disposed to give my life a thousand times rather than to renounce my belief in the Real Presence in the blessed sacrament. Amen.

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## VII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Blessed Eucharist (*Cont'd*)

The sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist may be considered under three aspects: 1st. As the food of our soul in the holy communion; 2d. As the victim in the sacrifice of the Mass; 3d. As our friend present with us in the tabernacle.

Our duties to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament are two: respect and devotion.

I. *Respect.*— A church in which the Holy Eucharist is preserved is the house of God and the sanctuary of His divinity. Jesus resides there both as God and as man, as He resided in the stable of Bethlehem, in the house of Nazareth and in that of Zacheus, upon Calvary, in the sepulcher, or as He is in heaven. It is the same God, the same Saviour hidden under the Eucharistic veil. Such is our faith, and no one would be a true Catholic if he did not believe this truth with all his heart.

How great, therefore, should be our reverence in presence of the Blessed Sacrament! The temple of Solomon was regarded as such a holy place that the Israelites were forbidden to enter it unless they

were free from all stain. Within the inclosure of the temple there was a place called the *Holy of Holies*, into which the high-priest alone had the right to enter once a year. The vestibule of the Holy of Holies was opened only to the priest for the offering of the sacrifices, and any other Israelite who should dare to enter the vestibule was stoned to death, as a sacrilegious man and profaner of God's temple. Osias, one of the kings of Israel, dared to enter the vestibule to offer incense to God, but he was instantly struck with leprosy, which deprived him of his kingdom and shut him away from the society of men for the rest of his days.

But, after all, the temple of Solomon contained only the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's protection over the Israelites, and of His compact with them. God showed His presence only from afar in the temple of Solomon. How holy and awful should the temple of the New Law be, that contains the Deity Himself!

In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we should behave in a most respectful manner, occupying ourselves only with meditation and prayer. We should adore God in this sacrament of love as the angels in heaven do: *And let all the angels of God adore Him* (Hebr. 1. 6), as the magi in the stable of Bethlehem, as Magdalen when she prostrated herself at His feet to wash them with the tears of her repentance and love.

How shamefully do those act who, in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, talk, laugh, and give themselves up to worldly thoughts, as if they were in a profane place! How much more guilty are those who carry on indecent conversation, or who find pleasure in bad looks, thoughts, and desires in the holy place! How can a Christian behave with levity and indifference in presence of Him who is his God, his Saviour; in the presence of Him who one day will be his judge? If a heretic or an infidel should behave himself irreverently in the Church, I could understand it. His conduct would be in keeping with his belief; but for disciples of Christ and children of the Church to act thus, passes my understanding.

2d. *Devotion.*— This devotion to the Real Presence will manifest itself by frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It is, indeed, sad and deplorable to behold the indifference of men towards the Holy Eucharist, and their negligence in visiting our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I do not speak of those who live far from the Church, and whose manifold occupations hardly permit them to visit the Church.

But how many there are who could very conveniently come to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and who, nevertheless, never enter the holy place except when the law of the Church obliges them! Such an indifference and ingratitude is unworthy of a Christian who has the faith. If you have a sincere and affectionate friend, do you not consider it a duty to visit him from time to time, and do you not like him to visit you? If you live separated from a father or a mother whom you love, are you not anxious to see them again and again? Christ in the Holy Eucharist is for you a father and a friend, and your best friend, your most tender father; and not only does He desire you to come and visit Him in the place of His solitude and loneliness, which He has chosen out of love for man, but He also invites you in the most pressing manner. *My delight is to be with the children of men* (Prov. VIII. 31). *Come to me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you* (Matt. XI. 28). Jesus invites us to come and see Him and to pray to Him: *My eyes shall be open and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place* (II. Par. VII. 15). God is ready to hear our prayer in every place, but it is easy to understand that prayers made in Church before the Blessed Sacrament are more pleasing to Him and more efficacious to us. The Church is the house of prayer, the gate of heaven, and the throne of mercy.

The liberality of Christ, His infinite tenderness, His touching and inexhaustible goodness towards men inspired the saints with the tenderest devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament. St. Vincent of Paul visited the Blessed Sacrament as often as he could, and the only relief he found in his great occupations was in kneeling for a long time before the holy tabernacle. St. Gertrude often passed entire nights at the foot of the altar, adoring our divine Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. It was before the Blessed Sacrament that St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, sought hope after his long fatigues, in laboring for the salvation of souls.

If you cannot imitate such examples in their fullness, follow them at least as much as your situation allows you. Come from time to time, come every day if possible, to adore Jesus in the sacrament of His love. You cannot do anything more agreeable to Him or more profitable to yourselves. Sinners, come to beg of Him the grace of conversion; lukewarm souls, beg for fervor; and just souls, pray for perseverance. Afflicted, abandoned, and persecuted souls, ah! come,

come to find a refuge in the pious and holy asylum; come to tell Jesus your pains and miseries; come to beg Him to assist you to carry your cross, and be assured that you shall depart relieved and consoled.

Assistance at Holy Mass in the morning, and a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the evening, should be the practice of every pious Christian if possible. Assist also at Benediction, every time you have an opportunity to do so. How many graces and consolations there are in those happy moments, when our Lord leaves His retreat and appears on the altar, as a father among His children, to bless them!

May all these considerations, my brethren, inspire you with the devotion and respect which you owe to the adorable sacrament of the altar! May you, in future, by your profound veneration and your ardent piety, make some amends to our Saviour for the indifference and ingratitude of bad Christians towards Him in the very sacrament of His love! Amen.

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## VIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Holy Communion

*Its Effects — Frequent Communion*

Holy Communion is the receiving of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. Faith teaches us that the Holy Eucharist contains Jesus Christ whole and entire under the species of bread and wine. To receive Holy Communion is to receive the body, the blood, the soul, and the divinity of Jesus Christ. That is, the same body that was attached to the cross, the same blood which flowed under the knife of the circumcision and upon Calvary, the same soul which, in the Garden of Olives, was sorrowful unto death, the same divinity which took flesh in the womb of Mary through the operation of the Holy Ghost.

During the first ages of the Church, the faithful received communion under the form both of bread and of wine, just as the priest who celebrates Mass; because it was in that manner that our Saviour gave

communion to His apostles at the Last Supper. This practice was continued, generally, until about the eleventh and twelveth century. But it was accompanied with serious inconveniences, and it happened sometimes that the sacred blood was spilled. The Council of Constance, in 1414, decided to allow communion under both kinds only to the priest at the sacrifice of the Mass. Communion under the form of bread alone is perfectly valid, since Jesus Christ is whole and entire under each species.

The effects of Holy Communion are wonderful. It unites us intimately with Christ; it weakens concupiscence, that inclination towards evil which we have inherited from the sin of our first parents; it increases sanctifying grace; it is a source of many actual graces and a pledge of eternal life.

I. Holy Communion unites us with Christ in the most intimate manner. Jesus Christ Himself compares this union with that which takes place between the corporal nourishment and the body which receives it. *My flesh is meat, indeed; and my blood is drink, indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me and I in him* (John VI. 56–57). Just as only one substance is formed of the nourishment and the body which takes it, so also in Holy Communion only one substance is formed of Jesus Christ and of the one who receives Him; with the distinction, that corporal food is assimilated to the body and becomes a part of it, whilst in the Holy Communion, Jesus Christ changes us into Himself, and makes us in some manner another Christ. It is not only His flesh which communicates itself to ours, but His soul, His divinity, which resides in us. The three adorable persons of the Most Holy Trinity take up their abode in us, not only by their immensity, as in the creation, not only by sanctifying grace, as in the souls of the just, but by a special grace attached to this sacrament, in such a manner that if the Father and the Holy Ghost were not already everywhere, they would be in us through their union with Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. "O prodigy of the love of God, who unites itself with us," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "as two pieces of molten wax, so well mingled together that they cannot be distinguished one from another! A God unites Himself with us as the soul is united with the body; or in the same manner as Jesus Christ Himself, as God, is united with the Father in the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity." *As I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me* (John VI. 58). It is as if He would

say, just as I and the Father are one, on account of the divine nature which is common to us, so also am I one with the soul that receives me in the Blessed Eucharist.

II. It is impossible fully to appreciate the honor which results for us from such an intimate and ineffable union! To understand it fully we would have to be capable of measuring the immense, the infinite, distance which exists between God and the creature, between the almighty power and weakness itself, between the infinity itself and nothing. Could we have ever believed that a miserable sinner, a worm of the earth, would be allowed to sit at the table of his God and to nourish himself with His adorable body and blood? St. Elizabeth was astonished when the mother of her Saviour came to her. The centurion of the Gospel regarded himself as unworthy of having Jesus come into his house. But Jesus comes into our hearts and makes Himself our food. What an extraordinary condescension!

Mary, the Mother of God, is deemed blessed above all creatures, because she had the happiness of bearing for nine months in her chaste womb the body of God. But everyone who receives the Holy Communion receives his God into his heart. Holy Communion is a nuptial feast, at which our soul becomes the spouse of God Himself, the temple of His Deity. The soul becomes, in some manner, deified, and the members of the body become the members of God Himself.

Blessed, and a thousand times blessed, is the body of the faithful Christian, who is thus sanctified by the presence of Jesus Christ! Blessed are the lips which are colored with this adorable blood! In possessing God what more can we desire, since we possess the very source of all good?

III. Faith teaches us that Holy Communion is an inexhaustible source of graces for the soul that receives it. *I am the bread of life*, says Jesus Christ, *he that eateth this bread shall live forever* (John VI. 50). Christ in the soul of the faithful is a furnace of love which burns continually. As it is the nature of fire to warm, to consume, and to lighten, so also Christ, in the Holy Communion, consumes and warms men and enlightens the ignorant. If St. John, the well-beloved disciple, was overwhelmed with grace when he rested on the adorable bosom of his Master; if the prophet Elias derived so much strength from that mysterious bread, a figure of the Eucharist, which an angel of God offered him in his journey to the top of Mount Horeb, what must we not expect from this "bread of the strong, from this

wine which brings forth virgins," from this divine Saviour, when He comes into our heart in the Holy Communion.

When a soul is nourished and filled with this heavenly food, nothing can separate it from God, neither the world with all its charms, nor the passions with all their fury, nor hell with all its temptations. What was it that gave the martyrs so much strength and courage in the midst of torments, if not the Holy Communion? The bishops sent it into their houses, into prisons, to the persecuted Christians; and these brave men and women went forth, as Tertullian says, like lions breathing fire, and dreadful to the devil himself. What the Christians of the first centuries experienced, we may also experience. Is not our inclination towards evil weakened, do not our temptations become less violent, and do we not feel ourselves more fervent and more inflamed with the love of God, more filled with zeal for our salvation, on the days of a good and holy Communion?

IV. Oh! how many falls, my brethren, would we avoid which we do not avoid; how many temptations, how many assaults would we escape if we had recourse oftener to this divine food! But with the infinite treasure of Holy Communion within such easy reach, how many there are who neglect it! How many there are who receive it only because the law of the Church commands it! Need we be astonished, then, that there are so many weak and languishing souls among us?

Three principal motives should move us to go often to Holy Communion. Jesus desires us to receive Him in Holy Communion; the Church desires it, and our soul needs it.

1st. *Jesus Desires Us to Receive Him in Holy Communion.*— He shows the desire, as well as our own need, by the very form He has chosen for the sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist. Bread and wine are, so to say, the daily nourishment of our body, and does this not indicate to us that the Eucharist ought to be the frequent nourishment of the soul? He proves this again by the direct invitation which He gives to all: *Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you* (Prov. IX. 5). *If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink; and if any man has hunger, let him come to me and I shall satiate him; and I shall remain in him, and he in Me; and I shall raise him up in the last day* (John VII. 37; VI. 57, 40).

2d. *The Church Desires Us to Receive Holy Communion Frequently.*—In the first ages of the Church, the Christians received Holy

Communion every day. The apostles, instructed by Christ, established this pious custom among the faithful, and it was observed during several centuries. Relaxation having introduced itself by and by, the faithful kept away more and more from this divine banquet. But the spirit of the Church always remained the same, and the General Council of Trent invited the faithful in the most touching terms — "By the bowels of God's mercy" — to live in such a manner as to be worthy to receive the bread of angels frequently; and it goes even so far as to express the desire that all those who assist at Mass should receive Holy Communion at the same time.

3d. *We Need Holy Communion for the Wants of Our Soul.*—Every day our soul is surrounded by darkness, exposed to be seduced and blinded by the errors, the prejudices, and the false maxims of the world. Every day our soul is surrounded by evil, dragged towards sin by our passions, by the artifices of the devil, and by the example of the world. Consequently, we need this heavenly food to sustain and strengthen us.

Frequent communion is the great remedy for all the evils of the soul and the inexhaustible source of all grace. Therefore, receive Holy Communion often, whoever you may be, but you especially, young people of both sexes, whose passions are often so violent and who find yourselves daily exposed to so many dangers.

Do not say that your conscience does not permit you to do so, for it depends entirely on yourselves to purify and prepare yourselves. Undoubtedly, you are not worthy, and you never will be worthy of receiving Jesus Christ, the Holy of Holies; but it is Jesus Himself who invites and urges you to receive Him in the Holy Communion. Do not say that you have no time; for how can time be better employed? And who cannot find, if he wishes, an hour in a week, or in a month, or, at least, on all the great feasts, to fulfill such an essential duty and to procure for himself such precious advantages?

Holy Communion produces fruits according to the preparation made to receive it. Therefore, always receive it with the best dispositions possible.

## IX. INSTRUCTION

### On the Holy Communion (*Concluded*)

*Necessary Dispositions*

The preparation which we should bring to Holy Communion is of two kinds: the preparation of the body and the preparation of the soul.

I. The preparation of the body can be reduced to two points: fasting and modesty.

The fast necessary before Holy Communion consists in not taking any food or drink from midnight. This law was established by the Church out of respect for this august sacrament, and to prevent the inconveniences or abuses which might result from the contrary custom. This law, according to the opinion of all the Doctors of the Church, admits of no lightness of matter, either in the quantity taken, or in the length of time elapsed since midnight, so that, even if one would have taken only a drop of water, after the clock has struck midnight, he cannot go to Communion. Like all the laws of the Church, it obliges under pain of mortal sin. There is an exception for the things which one may have swallowed in the course of respiration, as dust, rain, a snowflake, or the vapor of food preparing on the stove. Anything put into the mouth for the purpose of tasting, or for cleansing the teeth, and which is rejected immediately before a drop or morsel has passed to the stomach, does not break the fast.

This law does not apply at all to the sick who are in danger of death. Holy Communion can be given to the sick or to those in danger of death, at any hour of the day or night. This Communion is called the *Viaticum*. The Church, like a good and tender mother, is careful not to deprive her children of such a necessary nourishment, when they are in danger of death. If the illness continues, the sick person can communicate several times by way of *Viaticum*, but there should be an interval of a few days between the communions.

The second exterior preparation is modesty. This consists in cleanliness of the body, decency of dress, and propriety in behavior.

1st. *Cleanliness of the Body.*—When we visit the great ones of the earth, we are very careful of our exterior appearance. Why should we not show, at least, the same care of ourselves and respect for God before receiving the Holy Communion?

2d. *Decency of Dress.*— Days of communion are festival days. Hence, we should put on our best clothes, and arrange them in a becoming and decent manner, but without luxury and worldliness. If vanity and worldly luxury are always out of place, they are especially so in so holy an act as the Holy Communion. God looks especially at the heart; hence, the poor who have done their best to make a good appearance need not fear to come into His adorable presence if their hearts are pure and well prepared.

3d. *Propriety of Behavior.*— He would be guilty of great irreverence who should go to the holy table with a dissipated mien, looking all about him, and with a hasty walk. A really pious and faithful soul, at the time of communion, should forget the exterior world, banish all earthly thoughts, and think only of his nothingness and unworthiness, and of the grandeur of the God whom he is about to receive. The body will then, of itself, take a posture in keeping with the pious sentiments of the soul. We should approach this heavenly banquet with the hands joined and the head respectfully inclined.

II. But the preparation of the soul is the most important. If there are many who do not profit by Holy Communion, it is because they do not prepare themselves sufficiently. Jesus entered the bosom of Mary and she was overwhelmed with graces; He entered the house of Zacharias, and John the Baptist was sanctified in his mother's womb and filled with the Holy Ghost; Jesus entered the house of Zacheus, and from a sinner the publican became a just man; finally, He entered the house of Mary and Martha, and they became models of piety and zeal.

What is the *spiritual preparation* for this adorable sacrament? The first and most indispensable of all is the *state of grace.* The Holy Eucharist is the nourishment of the soul. Now, nourishment supposes life. Therefore, the soul must live the life of grace, so that this divine nourishment may produce its effects.

It is this state of grace which Jesus Christ spoke of under the figure of the nuptial garment, with which all had to be clothed who were invited to the table of the king. You know one of the guests was not clothed with this wedding garment at the arrival of the king, and he was bound hand and foot and cast into exterior darkness — an image of the eternal flames which are prepared for all those who communicate in the state of mortal sin (Matt. xxii. 13).

There is no crime more fearful than that of an unworthy communion. To lodge unclean animals in a Church, or to make it the theatre of a guilty passion, would be, undoubtedly, a horrible sin against the majesty of God; to take the crucifix from the altar and to drag it in the mire, would be an enormous crime; but this sacrilege would not be so great as the crime of an unworthy communion, because these are material objects. The unworthy communicant does not merely desecrate the temple of God, but he profanes God Himself, the body and blood, the soul and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

This crime, my brethren, has always been regarded by the Fathers of the Church as so abominable that they do not hesitate to compare it to the crime of the infamous Judas who betrayed his divine Master. Indeed, what signs of malice are found in the conduct of this perfidious disciple which we do not also find in the conduct of the Christian who communicates unworthily? Judas was the disciple of the Saviour; so also is the Christian. Judas sold his divine Master for thirty pieces of silver; the sacrilegious sinner delivers Jesus to the devil for a vile pleasure, for a false shame, or for some miserable gain. Judas betrayed our Lord with a kiss; so, also, does the unworthy communicant approach the holy table with all the appearances of respect and love, while the devil is in his heart.

How terrible, too, are the consequences of an unworthy communion! St. Paul says that he who eats and drinks unworthily the body and blood of Jesus Christ eats and drinks unto himself damnation: *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself* (I. Cor. xi. 29).

Among certain nations of antiquity, the guilty persons condemned to capital punishment were obliged to swallow the paper which contained the sentence of their condemnation, but in sacrilegious communion the sinner eats and drinks unto himself both his judgment and his condemnation. What can be more terrible? "If this judgment were written only upon paper," says a pious author, "it could be torn to pieces; if it were engraved upon wood, it could be burnt; if it were stamped upon bronze, it could be effaced; but when a sinner has eaten and drunk his own judgment and condemnation, and when this judgment has entered his veins and permeated the very marrow of his bones, when it has become changed into his own blood and substance, how can it be destroyed?"

Blindness of the mind, hardness of the heart, and final impenitence,

are the results of an unworthy communion. Recall to your mind the example of the infamous Judas. Hardly had he consummated his crime, when he became insensible to the admonitions of his divine Master, who still called him by the sweet name of friend: *Friend, whereto art thou come* (Matt. xi. 4). Instead of having recourse to penance, Judas gives way to despair and hangs himself to a tree. Like Judas, the unworthy communicant becomes spiritually insensible; he shuts his eyes to the most holy and most terrible truths; he smothers the remorse of conscience which he might have still in his soul; he heaps crime upon crime: he falls from one abyss into another, until, finally, death surprises him and plunges him into the everlasting flames of hell.

Ah, my brethren, be on your guard! Before approaching the holy table examine your conscience: *But let a man prove himself* (I. Cor. xi. 23); and if you find yourselves guilty of a grievous sin, throw yourselves at the feet of some charitable confessor, confess your sins, expiate them by a sincere penance, and go to Holy Communion only after having received absolution.

III. Purity of the soul is the first and most necessary of all dispositions. But if you wish that your communions should be profitable to you, do not limit yourselves to this. When the holy King David desired to build a temple to the Lord, he gathered all that was most precious and magnificent in the riches of nature, saying that, "It is not for man but for God that a dwelling is to be prepared." If a king were to visit you, would you not strive to receive him in a manner becoming to his dignity? But when the King of kings comes to visit you, let him find in your soul a dwelling that is agreeable to Him.

After the soul is in the state of grace, purify it as much as possible from venial sins. Venial sins do not render communion unworthy, but they hinder the soul from drawing all the profit of this holy action. The purer the soul is, the more does grace operate in it; the more love the soul has for God, the more God communicates Himself to it. We cannot, indeed, keep ourselves free from every stain of sin; but we can and must avoid the habit of sin and affection for certain venial faults, and we should do penance for these faults which we have committed through human frailty.

A second disposition of the soul is *detachment from creatures.* There are legitimate attachments which God permits and approves,

and which are in the design of Providence. But there are attachments which are inordinate and blameworthy, either because they have not God for first and principal object, or because they are too lively and too tender. We must purify ourselves from these inordinate affections before Holy Communion, because they lessen the intimate union which Jesus Christ desires to contract with us in this sacrament of love. It is this detachment from the creatures which God prefigured in the law of Moses, when He commanded his people to eat the paschal lamb with wild lettuces, the body erect, the loins girded, and a cane in hand; as if to remind us that we are only travelers in this world, that this earth is only a place of exile, and that our real country is heaven and that heaven should be the object of all our thoughts and affections.

Finally, we must neglect nothing that can excite in us *devotion and fervor*. Voluntary mortifications, the practice of good works, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, pious reading, meditation on our last end, are all very useful in preparing for Holy Communion. But especially on the eve of the happy day, it is well to increase your attention and devotion. Then you should say to yourselves: "Who is it that I am going to receive to-morrow? It is my God, the Holy of Holies, the One whose perfections enrapture the whole heavenly court. But who am I, O my God? A sinner, a worm of the earth. Do I merit to receive Thee into my soul? No, my Lord, I am much more unworthy than the centurion of the Gospel. However, I remember that Thou hast said: 'Come to me all you that are laden and heavily burdened, and I shall comfort you.' I shall approach Thy holy table with hope and full confidence that Thou wilt not reject a heart that loves Thee, that desires Thee, and would rather die than ever offend Thee again."

Such are the pious sentiments with which you should be animated on the eve of Holy Communion. On going to bed, try to fall asleep with the thought that on the next day you will have the happiness of sitting at the table of the King of kings. If you should awake during the night, occupy yourselves with the same holy thoughts. In the morning, you should rise promptly, and say: "Oh, what a beautiful day for me!" Go to Church early; during Mass recite the acts of adoration, of humility, contrition, confidence, and love towards God and your neighbor. Finally, when the time comes, approach the holy table, and, in receiving Jesus Christ into your heart, think of the Blessed Virgin at the moment of the Incarnation of the Word.

Adore God within your heart, bless Him, love Him, like this tender mother when she carried Him in her womb. Offer to Him the adoration and love of the whole heavenly choir. Having returned to your place, prostrate yourselves in spirit at His feet, like Mary Magdalen, embrace and wash them with your tears. Keep yourselves for some time profoundly recollected, in order to permit your heart to be enkindled with the fire of divine love, and cry out, like St. Elizabeth: "Whence is this to me, that not the mother of my God, but my God Himself has come to visit me in the poor house of my soul!" Express to your God sentiments of the most lively gratitude; offer Him in thanksgiving your heart, your mind, your whole self, with all that is dearest to you in the world; ask Him for the goods of which you stand in need for yourselves, for your parents, friends, and benefactors; pray also for the Church, as this is the most favorable moment to obtain all graces. After having entertained yourselves thus with your God, at least for a quarter of an hour, leave the Church modestly, praying God never to permit you to be separated from Him, and to grant you the grace to live in such a manner that you may possess Him in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

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## X. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrifice of the Mass

*Its Nature, Excellence and Effects*

Before entering on the explanation of the sacrifice of the Mass, it is necessary to explain what we understand by sacrifice in general.

I. A sacrifice is a solemn offering made to God, by a lawful minister, of a sensible and visible thing, accompanied by the destruction or change of the thing offered.

1st. I say that the sacrifice is a *solemn offering*, because, indeed, in religion, there is no action more imposing, more august, more holy, than a sacrifice.

2d. *Made to God*, because a sacrifice, being an act of adoration, and adoration being due to God alone, sacrifices can be offered only to

God. The demons caused the pagans to offer sacrifices to themselves because they wished to be adored as gods.

3d. *By a lawful minister.* A sacrifice being a public and sacred act, there must be a consecration, or an explicit deputation, in order to be able to offer it. This divine function has always been reserved to the priests. Core, Dathan, and Abiron were swallowed up alive into the earth, for having attempted to offer sacrifice without a lawful ordination.

4th. *Of a sensible and visible thing*, to distinguish it from interior and invisible offerings, which are not properly sacrifices.

5th. *Accompanied by the destruction or change of the thing offered.* If the thing offered be a living thing it must be killed; if it has no life, like the fruits of the earth, it must be burnt by fire. By destroying or changing the thing offered in sacrifice, one renders homage to the sovereign dominion of God, who is the Lord and Master of all creatures, and, therefore, He alone has the right over life and death.

Men have at all times offered sacrifices. Cain and Abel offered sacrifices to God; the one of the first fruits of the earth, and the other of the best of his flocks. Melchisedech, king of Salem, in his quality as priest of the Most High, offered to God bread and wine—a striking figure of the sacrifice of the New Law. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob also offered sacrifices to God. And when the Lord had drawn His people out of the bondage of Egypt, He prescribed to them the nature and the manner of the sacrifices, established a priesthood in the family of Aaron, and decreed that his descendants alone should have the right to offer sacrifices.

The pagans themselves were in the habit of offering to their false deities the fruits of the earth or the blood of the victims slain, and history makes mention of famous hecatombs where a hundred oxen were sacrificed at one time.

Why have all men, since the beginning of the world, offered sacrifices to the Deity? It was to acknowledge and to avow their entire dependence, to calm the wrath of God and to satisfy His justice irritated by their crimes, to ask Him for the graces and benefits they were in need of, and to show their gratitude for His gifts.

II. Under the law of nature, as under the law of Moses, God was pleased to content Himself with these rough sacrifices which consisted in the immolation of animals or in the offering of the fruits of the

earth. However, these sacrifices were far from being worthy of Him. They had virtue only in as much as they were offered in the faith and the hope of a coming Redeemer, of whose immolation they were a figure. In order that a sacrifice may be worthy of God, and that it may expiate the sins committed against Him, two things are indispensable: a victim which is perfectly agreeable to God, and a *priest holy, innocent, undefiled*, as St. Paul says, *separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens, who needed not daily to offer sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people* (Hebr. VII. 26). In a word, a God should be the victim, and a God should be the priest who sacrifices.

The eternal Word in His infinite wisdom found a means of accomplishing this. The adorable Son of God said to His Father: *Sacrifices and oblations and holocausts for sin thou wouldst not. . . . Behold, I come to do thy will* (Hebr. X. 7). He clothed Himself with our nature in order to render Himself subject to suffering and to sacrifice; and after having passed thirty-three years in obscurity and humiliations and suffering, He consummated upon Calvary the great sacrifice for which He had come down upon earth, and spilled the last drop of His blood in expiation of the sins of mankind.

The sacrifice which our Saviour offered upon the cross, being of an infinite price, was, undoubtedly, sufficient to repair the injury which sin had caused to God, and at the same time to render to Him the glory that is due to Him. However, as this bloody sacrifice could be offered only once, and in only one place in the world; and as, nevertheless, a sacrifice was needed which could be offered everywhere and until the end of time, according to the words of the prophet, the adorable Son of God again found the means to perpetuate and to universalize this sacrifice, by instituting the sacrifice of the Mass, which is not only a memorial, but also a renewal of the sacrifice upon Calvary.

III. What is the sacrifice of the Mass? It is a sacrifice in which Jesus Christ is offered to God under the form of bread and wine.

The Mass is a *sacrifice*, because it contains all the necessary conditions such as we have explained them. It is the offering of a *sensible and visible thing*, that is, of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, contained under the species of bread and wine. This offering is *made to God*, for to God alone we offer the sacrifice of the Mass; it is made by a *lawful minister*, that is, by the priests to whom Jesus Christ has

given the power, when at the Last Supper and after the institution of the Eucharist, as sacrament and as sacrifice, He said to them in the person of the apostles: *Do this in commemoration of Me.* Finally, there is an *immolation of the victim*, because Jesus Christ, after the consecration, is present upon our altars as in a state of death, without movement and without apparent life, and because the separate species of bread and wine represent to us the death of His body and the shedding of His blood.

Is the sacrifice of the Mass the same as that of the cross? Yes, it is the same sacrifice, because the priest is the same priest and the victim is the same. Jesus was the priest upon Calvary, and Jesus is the priest at the altar, because the priest at the altar represents Jesus Christ, being His minister and acting in His name. This is why at the consecration the priest does not say: *This is the body of Jesus Christ*, but, *This is My body—This is the blood of Jesus Christ*, but, *This is My blood.* The victim is the same as upon Calvary; that is, Jesus Christ immolates Himself by the hands of the priest as He immolated Himself upon the cross. Through the power of the words of consecration, Jesus is put in the state of Victim; He does not really die, but He dies in a mystic manner. Being risen from the dead, He cannot die corporally; but if He could die, the sacramental words, like a mysterious sword, would separate His body from His blood.

But though the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of the cross, the manner of offering it is different; for on Calvary, Jesus Christ really shed His blood, whilst upon our altar, He sheds it only in a mystic manner; His death is only represented. Upon Calvary he immolated Himself through the hands of the executioners, whilst upon the altar He immolates Himself through the intermediary of the priest.

Since the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the sacrifice of the cross, we must conclude that it is of an infinite price and value, and that it procures to God the same glory, and to men the same advantages, as the sacrifice on Calvary.

IV. Why was the sacrifice of the Mass instituted? For four reasons: to adore God, to thank Him for His benefits, to appease His wrath, and to obtain pardon for our crimes; finally, to obtain from His goodness the graces of which we stand in need. In other words, the sacrifice of the Mass contains in itself the virtue of the four sacrifices of the Old Law, which were called the Burnt offering, the Eucharistic, the Propitiatory, and the Impetratory.

1st. *To Adore God.*— Of ourselves we are unable to render to Him the honor and homage that are due to Him. There is no comparison between us sinners and miserable worms of the earth, and God who is grandeur and holiness itself. We can glorify God, to a certain extent, by our virtues and good works; but the glory which we procure to Him thereby is, and will always be, infinitely below what He merits. Only a God can glorify Himself in a manner worthy of Himself; in the sacrifice of the Mass, and there only, do we find the means to render to God an homage worthy of Him. The Mass being the offering of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, it follows that it has an infinite price, and that, consequently, it procures to God an infinite honor and glory. One single Mass honors God infinitely more than all men and all angels together could do. It is related of a saint, that, one day, being afflicted because she could not render to God the honor He merited, and telling Him of her desire of having all the hearts and all the tongues of men and all the fervor of the seraphim to adore Him and to bless Him in a worthy manner, the Lord appeared to her and said: "Console thyself, my daughter, because with one single Mass which thou hearest devoutly thou canst render to Me all the glory thou dost desire and which I merit."

2d. *To Thank God for His Benefits.*—We are all indebted to God's goodness, both in the order of nature and in the order of grace. The benefits with which He has overwhelmed us thus far and with which He overwhelms us every day, are numberless. . . . But how can we show to God our gratitude for such love and goodness? Will it be by the voluntary oblation of our goods, of our labors, of our entire life? But all these belong to Him, and, moreover, what would they all be in comparison with the gifts God has showered down upon us? The only means is the holy sacrifice of the Mass. By this, we offer to God a present really worthy of Him, because we offer to Him His only Son, the object of all His complacency, and who belongs to us, because He has given Himself to us: *For a child is born to us* (Is. IX. 6). This is why the sacrifice of the Mass is called Eucharistic, which means *sacrifice of thanksgiving.* This is why the priest in the celebration of the sacred mysteries cries: "Let us render thanks to the Lord, our God" — *Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro.* And all the people answer: "Yes, it is meet and just" — *Dignum et justum est.*

3d. *To appease the wrath of God* and obtain the pardon of our sins. The sacrifice of the Mass does not, indeed, efface our grievous

sins. Only contrition and the sacraments instituted for that purpose have this virtue. . . . But it remits venial sins, and, at least in part, the temporal punishment which we are to undergo either in this world or in the next. The sacrifice of the Mass is especially *propitiatory* in that it obtains for us the grace of conversion, and such great graces that, if we correspond with them, it becomes very easy for us, as the holy Council of Trent teaches, to reconcile ourselves with the Lord. And, indeed, if the blood of goats and oxen, which were immolated in the Old Law, was capable of purifying those who had contracted some legal stain, why should not the blood of Jesus Christ have the power to wash our souls from the stains of sin? When I see a priest at the altar, it appears to me that I see Jesus Christ Himself prostrate at the feet of His Father, and hear Him saying: "My Father, pardon these criminals who have merited the weight of Thy vengeance; I ask pardon for them: *For them do I sanctify myself* (John XVII. 19). They merit, indeed, all the rigor of Thy anger, but behold the same blood, the same victim which formerly disarmed Thy revenging hands upon Calvary; look on the face of Thy Son who intercedes for them: *Look on the face of thy Christ* (Ps. LXXXIII. 10) and show them mercy." How can God remain insensible to such a touching voice? How could He let fall the arm of His wrath upon a sinner covered with the blood of His divine Son? No, the power of the holy sacrifice is so great that without it, say several Fathers of the Church, the world would have perished long ago, on account of the numberless crimes committed; like Sodom and Gomorrha it would have been consumed by fire from heaven. The power is so great that it can change the most hardened sinner into a saint if he assist at this holy sacrifice with the proper dispositions.

4th. To ask for *the graces we are in need of*, either for the soul or for the body. Jesus Christ has said that whatever we ask of the Father in His name He will give it to us. *If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you* (John XVI. 23). It is for this reason that the Church always ends her prayers with the words: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.* What, then, must be our confidence, since Jesus Christ Himself, by immolating Himself upon the altar, is pleased to interest Himself in us, and to pray for us! What graces, either spiritual or temporal, may we not expect from His all-powerful mediation! It is in this sense that the sacrifice of the Mass is called *impetratory!*

These are the four principal ends of the sacrifice of the Mass. In the Mass we render to God all the honor He merits; we show to Him a gratitude equal to His benefits; we obtain the pardon of our sins; and we receive all the graces we need. O wonderful sacrifice! O the inestimable price, the infinite value of the holy Mass!

With what sentiments of respect, love, contrition, and confidence should we not assist at it! Let us thank God for such an ineffable benefit, and let us beg Him to give us the grace to profit by it in future better than we have done in the past! Amen.

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## XI. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrifice of the Mass (*Concluded*)

*Manner of Assisting at Mass*

In the last instruction, I spoke of the nature of the sacrifice of the Mass, its excellence, and effects. To-day, I shall teach you *to whom* and *why* we offer this sacrifice, the *dispositions* we should have in assisting at Mass, and the *best method of hearing* Mass well.

I. To whom do we offer the sacrifice of the Mass? To God alone; because to God alone Jesus Christ offered Himself upon the cross. But being an act of adoration by which we acknowledge God as the sovereign Creator and Master of all things, it is evident that it can be offered only to God. When a priest says Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin, or of the Saints, it is not to offer the sacrifice to them, but solely to thank the Lord for the graces which He gave them, and to obtain, through their intercession, the graces of which we are in need.

For whom is the sacrifice of the Mass offered? We offer it for the living and the dead. Hence, the double *Memento* by which both are remembered in the holy sacrifice. In the Memento of the living even the infidels, Jews, and heretics are remembered, because God wishes the salvation of all men. But it is especially for the faithful, true children of the Church, that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered, as is expressed in the offering of the sacred host: *Suscipe sancte*

*Pater.* . . . In this prayer, the priest prays for the head of the Church, our holy Father, for the bishop and the powers of the earth, for parents, friends, and all those who have recommended themselves to his prayers, and for those in particular who assist at Mass. But the sacrifice is offered especially for those who caused the Mass to be said; for they are recommended by name in the Memento.

But besides this mention of the *Living*, it is also the desire of the Church that the sacrifice of the Mass should be offered up for the *Dead;* that is, for the souls in purgatory. This custom goes back to the first centuries, and can be only of apostolic tradition, as the Council of Trent believes. In these Masses, which we call *Requiem Masses* and which are said with black vestments, everything reminds us of death, judgment, and eternity. The Church does this, in order that its prayers and ceremonies should attain their purpose more directly, and also to remind us all of our last end. However, there are days when the priest is not permitted to say Mass in black; but in whatever color it is said, its fruit may be equally applied to the souls in Purgatory.

I most heartily recommend to you, my brethren, often to have the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered up, either for the living or for the dead, because you cannot do a work more agreeable to God and more beneficial to your soul, or to the souls for which the sacrifice is offered. But be careful not to say that you have paid for a Mass, that the Mass has cost you so much. Only ignorant or impious people use such language. The Mass, being the immolation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, is worth infinitely more than all the money in the entire world. When one gives money to a priest, it is a simple offering one makes to him for his support. It is a work of charity and a privation which you impose upon yourselves, and which makes the sacrifice all the more profitable to those to whom its benefits are applied.

II. With what dispositions should we assist at Mass? They are four in number: faith, respect, contrition, and confidence in Jesus Christ who immolates Himself for us.

1st. *Faith.*— Only faith can reveal to you all that is sublime and ineffable in this divine mystery. With the eyes of faith, you will see a God immolated, annihilated upon our altars, as upon Calvary; and without faith, you will see nothing. With faith you feel yourselves burning with love, like the Seraphim; and without faith, you will remain cold and indifferent like the statues which decorate the altars.

Therefore, often make acts of faith during Mass, and cry out from the bottom of your heart: "I believe, O my God, that this is Thy body, Thy blood, Thy soul, and Thy divinity, that immolates and annihilates itself out of love for me; yes, I believe it as if I saw it with my own eyes."

2d. *Respect.*— Your exterior behavior should be respectful. During Mass, you should be kneeling, except during the parts when it is permitted to stand or to sit down, and your behavior should be humble, modest, and recollected. It is really a sad thing to see so many Christians assisting at Mass in such a careless and negligent manner. They can hardly be said to be kneeling, for if they are not sitting most of the time, their posture is such that they are more sitting than kneeling. But what is still more sad, is that dissipation, that levity, that irreverence, to which many give way so easily. Look, for example, at that young man, at that worldly woman; not only do they not pray, but they hinder others from praying; they talk, they laugh, and look about. May we not rightly fear that their eyes and hearts are feasting on pictures or thoughts that are far from being decent, and that before the very altar of God they foster criminal relations? What! in this holy place, and while a God immolates and annihilates Himself for us, they dare to amuse themselves and to deliver themselves to dissipation and sin! But, Christians, have you forgotten that during the sacred mysteries, there are thousands of angels prostrate before the altar? And are you not afraid to imitate the criminal mockery of the Jews who, bending their knees before the Saviour upon the cross, saluted Him saying: *Hail to Thee, O King of the Jews* (Matt. xxvii. 29).

I conjure you, my brethren, when you assist at Mass, think on the holiness of the place in which you are, and on the ineffable mysteries that are going on. Show respect in your whole exterior, and try to feel this respect in your heart, for without this interior respect the outward would be only a sham and a mockery.

If, with the faith that you have, you could have assisted at the bloody sacrifice of Calvary, with what profound awe would you not have been seized, with what veneration would you not have collected the adorable blood that was streaming from the cross? Let your sentiments be the same in the sacrifice of the Mass, because it is the same sacrifice with the same priest and the same victim, Jesus Christ our Lord.

3d. *Contrition for Our Sins.*— Is there anything better calculated to inspire us with sorrow for our faults than the remembrance of Calvary, of which the altar is such a living representation? During Holy Mass consider how much it has cost Jesus Christ to expiate your sins, and excite yourselves to sorrow for having committed them, remembering that you renew the torments of His passion every time you offend Him grievously. It is not sufficient that the Saviour immolates Himself for us, but we must also mingle our tears with the blood which He has shed upon the cross, if we desire that the fruit of His sufferings should be applied to us, and we must sovereignly detest all our sins which have been the cause thereof. The Gospel tells us that at the death of the Saviour the rocks were split, the veil of the temple was rent asunder, and that those who were witnesses of these prodigies went home striking their breasts. Let us have the same dispositions when we assist at the holy sacrifice. To hear Mass with a perverted heart, with an intention of persevering in sin, would be crucifying the Saviour anew.

4th. *Confidence in Jesus Christ Who Offers Himself for Us.*— The sacrifice of the Mass is *impetratory;* that is, it is offered to God to obtain from His goodness the graces of which we stand in need. With what confidence should we not come to the altar of the Lord and beg of Him all that is necessary for us both for body and soul! If God is always ready to listen to our prayers, provided that they are offered with a well-disposed heart, with how much more reason will He listen to us at such a favorable moment, when the Son of God Himself serves as our mediator?

Have we always assisted at Mass with sentiments of faith, respect, contrition, confidence, and union with Jesus Christ who immolates Himself for us? Three kinds of persons assisted at the sacrifice on Calvary: some to crucify Jesus Christ or to insult Him; others from mere curiosity, and to see how this tragic scene would end; and some, like the Blessed Virgin, the well-beloved disciple, and the holy women, to sympathize with Jesus in His sufferings. Which of these three kinds have you imitated until now? Have you followed the example of those pious souls who wept at the foot of the cross? Or were you of the crowd, or, worse than all, were you among the soldiers and executioners who nailed Him to the cross? Ask pardon of God for your indifference and promise to behave yourselves in future before Him, like the faithful disciples at the foot of the cross.

III. The following is an excellent method of hearing Mass and all the more useful as it is within the reach of every one, even of those who cannot read. It consists in contemplating Jesus Christ offering Himself upon the altar, as if one were present on Calvary, and in penetrating oneself with sorrow and love, while meditating in turn upon the different sufferings of His passion. In order to render easy this practice, I shall mention the chief ceremonies of the Mass, and show you how they remind us of the different circumstances of the passion and death of our Lord.

In the first place, imagine you see Jesus Christ in the person of the priest clothed with his sacerdotal garments, and look on the altar as a new Calvary.

The alb is the long, white robe which the priest wears, and reminds you of the white robe with which Herod clothed Jesus in mockery, and of the humiliations which the Saviour suffered in the court of this prince. Here each one can say to himself: If He who was wisdom itself wished to be treated like a fool, is it not a shame that I always seek to distinguish myself among others by my vanity and my dress?

The cincture with which the priest is girded, the stole which he wears around his neck, and the maniple which is suspended from the arm, represent the chains and the cords with which the Saviour was bound. What a spectacle! A God treated like a criminal! Should I not be resigned in the midst of the trials, contradictions, and sufferings of life? On the chasuble, you notice a large cross; it reminds you of the heavy cross which the Saviour was obliged to carry on His shoulders to Calvary. What an encouraging example to carry ours with patience and resignation!

The chalice which the priest holds in his hand when going to the altar represents the chalice of the passion which God the Father presents to Jesus and which He accepted so generously. Is it thus that we accept the chalice of bitterness and affliction that is offered to us?

The priest who goes to the altar, with those who serve the Mass, represents Jesus Christ going into the Garden of Olives with His disciples. When he ascends the steps of the altar alone, leaving the servers at the lower step, he represents our Saviour going alone to pray. When he recites the *Introibo* and when he inclines himself profoundly during the *Confiteor*, he represents Jesus Christ prostrate in prayer, and falling into a mortal agony. When he reascends the altar and

kisses it, he represents Jesus Christ betrayed by the infamous Judas and delivered to His enemies. When from the middle of the altar he goes to the Epistle side, and from the Epistle side returns to the middle to go to the Gospel side, and, again, from the Gospel side returns to the middle, he represents Jesus led first to Annas and Caiphas, who judged Him guilty of death; then brought before Pilate, who declares Him innocent; and from the tribunal of Pilate to Herod, who clothes Him as a mock king, and, finally, from the palace of Herod back to Pilate who condemned Him to death. During all these ceremonies, meditate upon all that the Saviour suffered in these various tribunals of Jerusalem.

After the Gospel and the *Credo*, the priest removes the veil that covers the chalice; this represents Jesus Christ stripped of His garments before the scourging and the crowning with thorns. Then the priest offers the host and the chalice; this represents Jesus offering His torments to His heavenly Father for the expiation of our sins. The priest washes his hands; Pilate did the same when protesting that our Saviour was innocent, which, however, did not hinder him from condemning Him to death.

Having returned to the middle of the altar, the priest inclines himself profoundly and recites in a low voice various prayers; this represents Jesus Christ going up the mount of Calvary, bent down under the heavy weight of the cross. The priest turns around to the people and says: *Orate Fratres*, Pray Brethren; this represents Jesus Christ turning towards the holy women, who followed Him weeping, and telling them not to weep for Him, but rather for themselves; for He adds: *If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry* (Luke xxiii. 31). If the divine justice is so inexorable in regard to the just, how much more rigorous will it be against the sinner!

Immediately after the consecration, the priest raises the host and the chalice in succession; this represents the elevation of Jesus Christ upon the cross for the salvation of men. The priest continues to pray; Jesus upon the cross prays for His executioners. The priest divides the host; our Saviour gives up the ghost; His soul is separated from His body. After the division on the host, the priest lets a particle fall into the chalice; this represents the soul of Christ descending into Limbo.

In saying the *Agnus Dei*, the priest strikes his breast, and thus reminds us that at the death of Jesus Christ many of those who were

present struck their breasts and confessed that Christ was really the Son of God: *Indeed, this was the Son of God* (Matt. xxvii. 54).

The priest in communicating, so to say, buries in his heart the body and blood of Jesus Christ; so, also, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and other holy persons, buried Jesus Christ after His death.

When the sacrifice is finished, the priest turns again towards the people and says to them: *Dominus vobiscum*, "may the Lord be with you"—it is Jesus Christ risen, giving the peace to His apostles and to His disciples in the Cenacle where they were assembled. Then the priest blesses the people, and leaves the altar; so, also, Jesus blessed His apostles before leaving them to go into heaven.

Such are the principal ceremonies of the Mass. You see how many mysteries they contain and with what excellent reflections they may inspire us. During the Holy Mass, follow the different circumstances of the passion. Meditate upon the sufferings which Jesus wished to undergo out of love for us, upon the torments to which He condemned Himself to expiate our crimes, and you will be sure to assist with fruit at this adorable sacrifice.

If your mind is not capable of making a long meditation, recite some vocal prayers, or read the ordinary prayers of Mass in your prayerbooks, following the priest at the altar step by step.

IV. In ending this instruction, I would earnestly recommend you, in the interest of your souls, to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass as often as possible. How can you permit the working of so many wonders, so near you, without witnessing them? How can you allow the blood of Jesus Christ to flow every day upon our altars without coming to apply it to your souls? I know that many cannot hear Mass often; but if you can conveniently do so, why do you not do it? Let me remind you of the popular proverb full of meaning and truth: "Mass does not delay us, nor do alms make us poor." Ah! my brethren, be sure that the time which you spent to hear Mass will be for you the time of the day best employed; and your day's work will be a good one when you commence it by hearing Mass with devotion. It is said of a pious and celebrated preacher, Pere Lejeune, that when he was no longer able to say Mass, on account of his blindness, he, nevertheless, wished to be led every day to the chapel to hear Mass. And when one day no one came for him, because he was confined to his bed, he dragged himself alone into the chapel, and to those who remonstrated with him for his imprudence, he answered that the greatest comfort for

him was to assist at Mass. All the saints had the most tender devotion for the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Imitate their examples, according as your situation in life will permit. Assist often at this holy sacrifice with the most profound devotion, the most lively faith, the greatest attention, the most firm confidence, and be sure that the Lord will shower upon you the most abundant graces. Amen.

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## XII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrament of Penance

Penance may be considered as a *virtue* and as a *sacrament*.

Considered as a virtue, penance disposes the sinner to detest the sins which he has committed and to satisfy the divine justice by expiatory works. In this sense it hardly differs from contrition and satisfaction. At all times the virtue of penance has been an indispensable necessity for the remission of sins. The sinners who lived before the coming of Christ could not obtain pardon of their sins without it.

Let us consider penance only as a *sacrament*. It is an article of faith that Jesus Christ raised penance to the dignity of a sacrament when He said to His apostles: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (John xx. 23). He desired to render the virtue of penance more meritorious by making it a sacrament, and to furnish to the sinner an easier means of reconciling himself with God.

I. *Penance is a sacrament which remits the sins committed after baptism.* The *visible sign* consists in the acts of the penitent, confession, contrition, and satisfaction, and in the absolution of the priest. This visible sign was *instituted by Jesus Christ*, and it was instituted *to sanctify us*, because it has the power of remitting sins.

It is true that God alone can remit sins; for it is evident that only the offended person can grant pardon. *Who can forgive sins but God only?* (Mark ii. 7.) But our Saviour before ascending into heaven wished to intrust this power to those He had appointed as His representatives upon earth, who were to be the depositaries and the distributors of His graces. He confirmed this great power given to His

apostles after His resurrection, when He spoke the solemn words: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* . . . Jesus had promised this power to them before His resurrection, when He said to His apostles, and to St. Peter in particular: *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18).

By virtue of these words, priests have the power to remit or to retain sins; and priests alone, because they alone were represented in the person of the apostles, and because they alone have exercised this sacred ministry from the beginning of the Church down to our time. But the priests must receive jurisdiction from the bishop; without this, except in case of necessity, all their absolutions would be null and void.

II. Great and astonishing is this power given to priests! A priest sits in the sacred tribunal of penance; a great sinner comes to confession with good dispositions; the priest raises his hand to absolve him, and he is pardoned by God in the same instant. Hell is closed for him and heaven is opened. Is there a power on earth, after that of consecrating the body and blood of Jesus Christ, comparable to this power which the priest exercises in the sacred tribunal of penance? The judges of the earth can absolve only those whom they believe to be innocent; kings and princes may grant amnesty and pardon the guilty, but only in what concerns the interests of the present life; whilst the priest influences the entire eternity of a sinner. If you were to see a priest go up to a grave and, with one word, call a corpse to life again, you would be astonished at the wonderful miracle. But is not the miracle of the confessional still greater, since the priest restores life and the hope of blessed immortality to a soul dead to grace?

III. What are the effects of the sacrament of penance? Not only does it remit sins, but it remits them all without exception, and it remits them without delay, in every circumstance and forever.

It remits them *without exception;* however numerous and however enormous they may be; for God does not pardon by halves. He pardons all or nothing. *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven.*

It remits them *without delay.* The trials which the confessor may require are only to assure himself of the good dispositions of the penitent. But as soon as the sacramental words are pronounced, all is over. The devil is driven from his soul, and the Holy Ghost reënters

it. The absolution is like a purifying fire which leaves no stain behind.

In *every circumstance*, that is, not only sometimes, but every time, the sinner has recourse to this means of salvation. God's goodness is infinite and His mercy is inexhaustible. It is a new pool of Siloe into which one can plunge himself at will. What a difference between God and the princes of the earth! Even the mildest and most merciful of kings may sometimes pardon a first offense, but rarely a second or a third. But God puts no other limits to His mercy and His pardon except those which the sinner puts to his confidence and to his repentance.

Finally, *forever*. The sins remitted by the sacrament of penance never revive. *The gifts of God are without repentance*, says the Apostle (Rom. xi. 29); and God's pardon once granted is never revoked. When the sinner falls into new sins, undoubtedly he becomes more guilty, on account of his ingratitude and of the abuse he makes of grace; but the sins pardoned will never again be imputed to him, for once effaced they appear no more.

Not only does this sacrament remit all sins without exception, without delay, in every circumstance and forever; it repairs, also, all the evil which sin had caused in our soul and restores to us all the goods of which sin had deprived us. Through sin we had become the enemies of God and the slaves of Satan; by absolution the friendship of God is restored to us, and the devil is driven from our souls. By sin we had merited hell and lost heaven; by absolution the eternal punishment is remitted to us, and the gates of heaven are reopened to us. Through sin our soul had lost its primitive beauty, and had become so soiled and degraded that it was only an object of horror; but by absolution it is purified, cleansed from all its stains; it recovers its garment of innocence and becomes again an object of pleasure in the sight of God.

Through sin we lost all the merits we had acquired, so that if we should have had the misfortune to die in that state, even after having passed the greater part of our life in the practice of good works, these merits would have amounted to nothing. Moreover, as long as we should have remained in sin, it would have been impossible for us to acquire new merits; we would be like branches cut off from the stem and which bear fruit no longer. By absolution we recover all our lost merits; and henceforth all our good works, all our mortifications, all

our practices of piety will be so many precious stones that shall enrich the crown which God prepares for us in eternity.

Add to these advantages the consolations which the state of grace procures to a soul; that unspeakable calm and peace which it gives us, instead of those bitter remorses and continual troubles which we find in crime; that strength and virtue which it gives us to resist the temptations of the devil, and to surmount the many obstacles we meet with every day in the way of salvation, and then you shall have an idea of the efficacy of the sacrament of penance, and of all the good which it procures to our souls. After the Holy Eucharist, is not the sacrament of penance the masterpiece of God's goodness and mercy?

O you who are terrified at the multitude of your crimes, have confidence! However deep the abyss into which you have fallen, it depends only upon yourselves to be drawn out. As great as is the evil, so great is also the remedy. Have recourse to the sacrament of penance; plunge yourselves into this healing bath, into this mystic Jordan, and, like Naaman the leper, you will be purified and healed from your uncleanness.

In whatever state you may be do not delay, for the longer you wait the more difficult the healing will be. Do not say, "I shall do it later on," for later on, perhaps, you will not have time. And do you not know that it is the same with the diseases of the soul as with those of the body, and that by permitting them to run on, they end by becoming incurable? Undoubtedly, there are no crimes which cannot be remitted through the sacrament of penance; but you must also have sorrow for your sins, and this is precisely what is wanting when you grow old in these fatal habits. In the same measure that you abuse the goodness of God, grace is withdrawn, you fall into such a hardness of heart that it needs miracles to make you leave it. How many souls fall every day into hell, for having neglected the sacrament of penance! No one ever says: *I do not wish to convert myself, I do not wish to go to confession.* . . . But the sinner puts off his conversion from one time to another, from one year to another, from one mission to another. And while he delays life passes, death comes on without warning, and thus the sinner dies in his sins.

IV. In considering only the immense advantages attached to the sacrament of penance, every one should be led to have recourse to it every time that the state of his soul requires it. But there is a still stronger reason which obliges us to have recourse to the sacrament of

penance, at least if we have had the misfortune to commit a mortal sin. The Council of Trent formally declared (Sess. IV., c. 25) that *by divine law this sacrament is necessary for all those who have lost their baptismal innocence, as baptism is for those who are not regenerated.* So that all our prayers, all our mortifications, all our almsgiving, would amount to nothing, if, being a sinner — and who is not? — one did not have recourse to the sacrament of penance. There is, it is true, perfect contrition which justifies by itself; but this perfect contrition can be had only in so far as one has the intention to fulfill all the precepts, and especially that which obliges to confession or to the sacrament of penance. It is not, therefore, because this sacrament grants us the pardon of our sins that we should have recourse to it, but also because God and the Church command us to do so, and because it is the design of the divine wisdom that our iniquities should be pardoned only by this means. Penance is the second plank after shipwreck, and the only one after baptism, if one has had the misfortune to sin grievously.

V. Five things are necessary for the sacrament of penance: examination of conscience, contrition, firm purpose of amendment, confession, and satisfaction.

But among these five things there are especially three which are indispensable: contrition, confession accompanied with absolution, and satisfaction. These we call the three essential parts of the sacrament. They constitute the matter and form of the sacrament. The acts of the penitent, namely, contrition, confession, and satisfaction, constitute the matter. The words of absolution, that is, the sentence which the priest pronounces over the penitent, saying: "I absolve thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," constitute the form.

A certain number of instructions will be necessary to develop well all these important points. Let us close by rendering our most sincere thanks to God for having been pleased to give us a sacrament which procures for us so many advantages. Let us lament our neglect in having profited so little by a means of salvation so efficacious and at the same time so easy, and let us resolve in future to make a better and more frequent use of the sacrament of penance. Amen.

## XIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Examination of Conscience

The first thing necessary, in preparing to receive the sacrament of penance, is the *examination of conscience.*

I. Examination of conscience is a diligent inquiry into one's sins. To make the examination well, you must, therefore, seriously reflect on the state of your soul, and search with care for the sins you have committed. It is not sufficient to glance rapidly over your past life, but you must search the inmost recesses of your heart to see what are your habits, faults, inclinations, and you must try to discover all the sins of action, word, desire, thought, omission, which you have committed against the commandments of God and of the Church, against the seven capital sins, and against the duties of your state of life.

II. The examination of conscience is necessary, at least, for the grievous faults. The sacrament of penance is like a criminal process in which the penitent performs the part of accuser and witness, and where the confessor, in passing judgment, has no other evidence but the very declaration of the penitent himself. But how could the confessor be able to pass a judgment, if the penitent did not reveal all his faults? And how could the penitent make known all his sins without examining his conscience? Also, the Council of Trent teaches us that no one should come to confession until he has searched the inmost recesses of his heart, and has morally assured himself that he remembers, at least as far as he is able, all the grievous sins which he has committed since his last confession.

Some one may say: "But I have not a good memory, and I do not know how to examine myself; I expect that my confessor, who is a learned and kind man, will question me, and I shall then remember my sins." Undoubtedly, if it is necessary, your confessor will question you, and this interrogation may be very useful. But do not imagine that this is sufficient. This confessor, who ordinarily does not know your habits, or your faults, or your affairs, or your relations with others, or the places which you frequent, or your antipathies, or your injustices, can question you only in a vague and general manner, if time and fatigue permit him even to do that much, and he might not question you on a number of things in which you are guilty. And even then, if your confessor is fortunate enough to make

all the interrogations which the state of your conscience requires, do you believe that, without a previous examination, you can answer him promptly and correctly? This is especially necessary for those who have not gone to confession for many years, and who have heaped crime upon crime. If you are called as witness before a court of justice, you are closely questioned by the opposing parties. But in spite of all the questions, it is often necessary to try beforehand to recall to your mind all that you have seen and heard about the case in question, before appearing in court. You would rightly be afraid of giving false or contradictory testimony if you did not render yourself a strict account beforehand of all that you know of the case. So, also, with the examination of conscience before confession. In spite of all the questions that the priest might ask you, it is often impossible to recall immediately all your sins, with their number and circumstances. If on account of a careless examination you forget anything of which you ought to accuse yourselves, your confession is not entire, and, therefore, it is null and void.

III. The examination of conscience is, therefore, of indispensable necessity. The time to be employed in the examination of conscience will vary according to the condition of the penitent, according to the kind of life he has led, and according to the time which has elapsed since his last confession. But, in all cases, one must employ sufficient time, and use the same care which we are accustomed to use in affairs of great importance.

If you are engaged in a lawsuit, what time and what care do you not employ in studying all the testimony that might be useful to you? You retire into a secluded place, and leave all other affairs aside; you employ all the resources of your mind and memory, in order not to neglect anything essential or useful to your interests. You should do the same in the examination of your conscience, since it is the salvation of your soul that is at stake.

If you are of the number of those who always have their conscience in order, who make their examination every evening, or at least every Sunday, who go frequently to confession, and who lead a well-regulated life, then I admit that the examination may be short, for if you had the misfortune to commit some mortal sin, it will be always uppermost in your mind, and you need not make any effort to recall it.

But if you are one who does not scruple to offend God, and who drinks iniquity like water, if you do not avoid the dangers of sin, and

if you expose yourself to dangerous occasions, and give full sway to your passions, and abandon yourself without fear and without remorse to injustice, calumny, detraction, hatred, impurity, and to all the excesses of debauchery, and let years go by without going to confession, then, certainly, the account which you have to render is great and complicated. You would deceive yourself if you were to believe that, without a long and serious examination, you can confess all the sins which you have committed, contenting yourself with naming them as they present themselves to your mind, and without troubling yourself about the rest. The absolution which you would receive in these conditions would be very uncertain, indeed.

The time to be employed in the examination of conscience must, therefore, be proportionate to the state of each one's conscience. If the conscience is in order, a few moments may be sufficient. But when it is pressed down under the weight of sins and loaded with criminal habits, it might require hours to examine one's conscience.

But is this rule observed? Is this the practice of those penitents whom one hardly sees except at Easter time, of those young men given up to dissipation and debauchery? In spite of the long space of time which has elapsed since the last confession, and in spite of all the vices and disorders in which they have lived, they think of this examination only the moment they go to church, and they enter the confessional without knowing what to say. What hope is there for such confessions, and for the absolution which accompanies them?

IV. In order to make your examination of conscience well, withdraw yourself from the noise of the world and, after having collected your thoughts, and having set aside all anxiety about your labors and affairs, pray God to enlighten your mind in order to clear up the chaos of your iniquities, in saying to Him with the royal prophet: *O my God, enlighten my darkness* (Ps. XVII. 29), or with the blind man of Jericho: *Make, Lord, that I may see* (Luke XVIII. 41), or with St. Augustine: "Lord, let me know Thee and let me know myself"; then beg the grace to be sorry for your sins.

The contrition necessary for the sacrament of penance is a grace which can come only from heaven, and we must, therefore, ask it earnestly of God.

This first duty fulfilled, proceed with your examination. Pass in review the commandments of God and of the Church, the seven capital sins, and the duties of your state of life.

If you cannot exactly remember the number of your sins, try at least to find out how long the habit has lasted, and how often you sinned every week or day.

The whole fruit of confession often depends on the examination of conscience. Do not seek vain excuses for your sins. On the contrary, be severe towards yourselves, and be assured God's mercy will be all the greater towards you. Do not be afraid to pierce the wall of your soul, according to the expression of the Holy Ghost Himself (Ezech. VIII. 9), and to remove the thick veil which hides from your eyes so many vices and so many iniquities; search all the recesses of your heart; take account of your actions, intentions and sentiments. . . . You will thus prepare yourselves to make good confessions, and to merit the grace of reconciliation. Amen.

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## XIV. INSTRUCTION

### On Contrition

*Its Necessity and Marks*

The word contrition is derived from a Latin word which signifies to crush, to reduce to powder. Holy Scripture employs it often to signify a great affliction and a great pain; the Church has consecrated this word to express the sorrow and repentance which should accompany the sacrament of penance.

"Contrition," says the Council of Trent, "is a pain of soul and a detestation of sin committed, accompanied with a resolution to sin no more."

According to this definition, two things are necessary for a real contrition: pain and the detestation of the sins committed, and a firm resolution to sin no more. Therefore, it is not sufficient for a penitent to be resolved to correct himself of his faults; he must also detest them from the bottom of his heart. Nor would it be sufficient merely to detest his sins if he did not have the firm resolution to correct himself. If one of these two conditions is wanting, contrition is insufficient; and confession is sacriligious if absolution is obtained.

I. Contrition, the first of the three parts of the sacrament of penance, is absolutely necessary to obtain the pardon of one's sins. Without contrition, the grace of the sacrament of penance is not received. Our divine Saviour teaches us this formally when He says: *Unless you shall do penance you shall all likewise perish* (Luke XIII. 3). St. Peter, answering the three thousand Jews who had become converted, and who asked him what they should do, told them that they must do penance and receive baptism for the remission of their sins: *Do penance and be baptized . . . for the remission of your sins* (Acts II. 38). The apostle St. Paul, speaking before the Areopagus of Athens, said that he came to announce to them in the name of God that if they wished to be saved they were obliged to do penance: *God, indeed, having winked at the time of this ignorance, now declareth unto man that all should everywhere do penance* (Acts XVII. 30).

Under the Old Law, the pardon of sins was granted only to contrite and repentant sinners. Mary Magdalen bathed with her tears the feet of the Saviour, and she is pardoned. St. Peter bewails his apostasy most bitterly, and he is pardoned. The good thief upon the cross acknowledges the enormity of his crimes, and he is pardoned; whilst the bad thief and the infamous Judas die as reprobates, because they do not repent of their crimes.

The formal doctrine of the Church, announced through the Council of Trent, declares that contrition has always been necessary to obtain the pardon of sins.

Our unaided reason would teach us this; for it is evident that God, infinitely merciful as He is, cannot pardon a sinner who does not repent of his sins. Could a father pardon a child who continues to show himself rebellious? Could a prince pardon a subject who continues to conspire against him? Contrition is the first condition of pardon. It is necessary like confession, even more necessary; for there are cases where one might obtain the pardon of his faults without confession, as when this would be impossible, whilst there is no case where sin can be pardoned without contrition. It is as necessary for the remission of actual sins as baptism is necessary for the remission of original sin, and even more necessary, because baptism can be supplied by desire or by martyrdom, whilst contrition can never be dispensed with. Without contrition, therefore, all the rest would be useless; prayers, alms, mortifications, confession, absolution, all would be in vain. What an illusion for a sinner who should expect to be

reconciled with God, merely because he has confessed his sins and received absolution! *Commence*, says the Holy Ghost, *by casting far from you all your iniquities, and by forming within yourselves a new heart* (Ezech. XXXIII. 14). *Rend your hearts and not your garments*, says the prophet Joel (II. 13). Contrition is the indispensable condition for pardon.

Contrition must have four qualities; it must be *interior*, *sovereign*, *universal*, and *supernatural*.

1st. Contrition must be *interior*, that is, it must come from the heart. It is the heart that sins; it is not the tongue or the hands. It is, therefore, the heart that must detest the sin. It is not sufficient to make acts of contrition with the lips alone, or to strike one's breast, or to shed tears; these marks of sorrow are good, indeed, as all these exterior acts are useful; but if they are not inspired by the heart, they are not contrition; they cannot obtain at all our justification. It might happen, perhaps, that you are touched by a sermon, or by a pathetic exhortation; your imagination may be frightened and you may shed tears. Do you believe that this is contrition? No; these tears may be a sign of contrition, but they are not contrition. Some are simple enough to believe that it is sufficient, before going to confession, to read formulas of acts of contrition from a prayer book, or to recite one from memory, or to make the Way of the Cross, etc. All these practices are good, but they are not contrition, and as long as you cannot say that your heart detests sin, as you detest sickness, plagues, and calamities, you cannot say that you have contrition.

2d. Contrition must be *sovereign;* that is, you must be more sorry for having offended God than for anything else, and you must be disposed to lose all rather than to offend Him anew. For there is no greater evil than sin; and all the evils of this world taken together are nothing in comparison with sin.

Must you, therefore, shed more tears over each of your sins than you would shed over the death of a father or a mother, or of some great misfortune? Not necessarily, for these exterior misfortunes affect the imagination and sensibility more directly; but down in your heart and in the calmness of your reason, you must detest sin more than all temporal evils, and you ought to be able to say in all sincerity: "My God, I would prefer to have lost everything than to have lost Thy grace; and henceforth I shall prefer Thy love and service to everything else." Such has always been the contrition of true

penitents. Such were the sentiments of St. John Chrysostom when he answered the messengers of the Empress Eudoxia, who threatened him in her name with the most frightful punishment: "Go and tell the princess," he answered, "that Chrysostom fears only one thing, and that is sin."

3d. Contrition must be *universal*, that is, it should extend, at least, to all the mortal sins. If there should be a single mortal sin for which you were not sorry, your contrition would be null and the absolution sacrilegious. The sacrament of penance remits all the sins at once, or it remits none at all. Our reason tells us that we cannot be the friends and enemies of God at the same time, worthy of heaven and hell at the same time, and that the motive which leads us to detest our sins, leads us, also, to detest them all. Many persons are in error in regard to this point. They detest certain vices and sins for which they feel a mere natural aversion. But as to detesting their favorite sin, or the predominant passion, that is quite a different thing. The unchaste man may detest pride, theft, hatred, and revenge, but does he also detest impure pleasures? A vain and proud woman may detest intemperance and theft, but does she detest her scandalous vanities and her unbridled luxury? It is absolutely necessary to detest all your mortal sins.

Absolution can remit the mortal sins, although at the same time you have no contrition for the venial sins. But these venial sins are not effaced, and I would exhort you to detest all your faults, whether mortal or venial. Since contrition is always necessary for the validity of the absolution, in case you have only venial sins to confess, for which you may not be sufficiently sorry, it is well to confess one of the mortal sins of your past life, for which you are heartily sorry.

4th. Contrition must be *supernatural.* The word *supernatural* means above nature. When I say, then, that contrition must be supernatural, I mean that it must come from God and that it must be excited in us by motives which God alone or faith can make known to us. It must be supernatural in *principle* and in its *motives.*

First, contrition must be supernatural in *principle.* Without the help of grace we can do nothing for salvation, not even have a good thought, or pronounce the holy name of Jesus in a meritorious manner. How, then, can we expect to obtain contrition, one of the greatest of graces, by our own efforts? God alone can give us this contrition and we must beg it of Him like the royal prophet: *O Lord, God of*

*hosts, convert us, and show Thy face and we shall be saved* (Ps. LXXIX. 20).

Secondly, contrition must be supernatural in its *motive*. The motives which can make us detest sin are of two kinds: natural and supernatural.

Natural motives of contrition are the evils which sin draws upon us in the order of nature, such as sickness, losses, and dishonor. Such motives cannot give a sufficient and salutary contrition. God does, indeed, disapprove of them. He cannot content Himself with mere natural sorrow, because it is not on account of having offended Him that we are sorry, but on account of the temporal evils which followed sin. If a young man, through his excesses, has ruined his health, and then deplores his sins, his contrition is merely natural. If a thief, a murderer, who is condemned to the penitentiary or to death, is inconsolable on account of his crimes, his contrition is merely natural. If a girl, through her scandalous conduct, has lost her honor, and weeps merely on account of the shame and the disgrace she has drawn upon herself, her contrition is merely natural, and avails nothing towards her forgiveness before God.

Such was the contrition of Antiochus, who detested and bewailed the evils which he had caused in Jerusalem, because they had drawn upon him such a loathsome disease that his body swarmed with worms, and his flesh fell off in lumps and sent forth an insupportable stench. Was he forgiven on account of this sorrow? No, says Holy Scripture, because it was not on account of the offense against God that he detested his crimes, but solely on account of the great punishment which his sins had brought upon him.

True contrition is founded upon *motives of faith*. Faith teaches us that sin is the greatest injury which we can commit against God, who is infinitely good and amiable, and the most audacious revolt by which we could attack His sovereign majesty. It teaches us that every time we commit a mortal sin, we crucify Jesus Christ anew. It teaches us that mortal sin robs the soul of its supernatural life, makes it an enemy of God, and a slave of the devil, and as hideous as the devil himself. It teaches us that sin deprives the soul of all its merits, and makes it impossible for it to acquire new ones as long as it remains in this state; that it closes the gates of heaven against us, and opens for us the gates of hell. Such are the supernatural motives of contrition.

In order to excite in yourselves a supernatural contrition, consider: 1st. The outrages which your sins have caused to God; 2d. The treasures which they caused you to lose; 3d. The evils which they merited for you.

A saintly bishop used to excite himself to contrition by making three stations: the first in hell, the second in heaven, the third on calvary. In the first, he meditated on the sad lot reserved for him if he happened to die in sin; in the second, he meditated on the infinite happiness which should be his reward if he were faithful; in the third, he would meditate on all that our Saviour had done and suffered out of love for him. This threefold consideration never failed to awaken in his heart the most lively sorrow.

The same motives should make the same impression upon you. Meditate upon them when you go to confession, and by this means you will render yourselves worthy to receive absolution, which will efface all your sins and bring you back to the grace and friendship of God. Amen.

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## XV. INSTRUCTION

### On Contrition (*Concluded*)

After having explained to you the nature of contrition, its necessity and character, it remains for me to speak of its different species and the marks by which we can recognize whether we have a true contrition or not.

I. There are two kinds of contrition: *perfect* and *imperfect* contrition; the latter is also called *attrition*. Perfect contrition is that which is excited in us by charity, that is, by the consideration that we have offended a God sovereignly perfect, infinitely amiable, and which makes us resolve never to offend God any more, even if there should be neither a heaven to hope for, nor a hell to fear. Imperfect contrition is that which is derived from the hideousness of sin or from the fear of the punishments; that is, because sin deprives us of grace, of heaven, of the merits we had acquired, of the quality as children of God, and because it merits for us endless sufferings in hell. It is

called imperfect contrition, or attrition, because the motives which inspire it are less perfect. In perfect contrition, it is the love which we have for an infinitely amiable God that makes us detest sin, and in attrition it is the evil which sin has caused to our soul. An example will easily explain the difference: —

Two children, by their disobedience, have greatly offended their father. Both are sorry for their fault, but from very different motives. One is sorry solely on account of the pain he has caused to so tender and generous a father. The other is sorry on account of the severe punishment which the fault draws upon him and of the loss of inheritance, which may be the consequence. The sorrow of the first of these children is an image of perfect contrition; the sorrow of the second, an image of imperfect attrition.

Thus, pious and fervent soul, you detest your sins because you have offended a God infinitely perfect, infinitely amiable, and your sorrow is so great, that, unmindful of punishment or reward, you would prefer to lose all, even life itself, rather than offend God again; you have perfect contrition. You, on the contrary, penitent soul, detest your sins, indeed, in a sovereign manner; but you detest them only because you have lost your right to heaven, and because you have merited the eternal flames of hell; you have imperfect contrition.

Perfect contrition is not necessary to obtain the pardon of sins in the sacrament of penance. It reconciles the sinner with God by its virtue, and independently of confession, for it is impossible that a God infinitely good can reject a soul that loves Him with a perfect love. Before the institution of the sacrament of penance, perfect contrition was the only means which sinful men had to regain the favor of God after they had offended Him. It was this contrition that justified an adulterous David, an apostate Peter, a sinful Magdalen. But although this contrition, even of itself, justifies the sinner, it does not, on that account, dispense with confession. Indeed, forgiveness is possible only in so far as one has the intention to go to confession. A soul cannot be penetrated with this perfect supernatural sorrow without being at the same time disposed to fulfill faithfully all the commandments of God and of the Church, and, consequently, ready to submit to confession.

II. The contrition necessary to obtain the pardon of sins in the sacrament of penance is attrition. With the grace of this sacrament

it is sufficient for our justification, if it is accompanied with a firm purpose of amendment, with confidence in God, and with a beginning of the love of God, considered as a source of justice. Let us examine each of these conditions.

1st. *A firm purpose of amendment*, that is, a sincere resolution to sin no more. There cannot be any true contrition without sorrow for the past, and firm purpose to sin no more in future. This is the teaching of the Council of Trent. Indeed, can any one conceive that God could pardon us for our crimes if we have the intention to offend Him again? It is not sufficient, therefore, that the sinner repents of having merited hell or lost heaven, but he must also be resolved not to sin any more in future; not merely to avoid hell, but in order not to offend God. If the sinner were to avoid sin only in order to escape hell, and were willing to commit sin if hell did not exist, he would not have sufficient contrition; his sorrow would be a mercenary sorrow or, as the theologians call it, "*servilely servile.*" Such a servile fear could very easily coexist with the affection for sin, and it would be nothing but the fear of the thief and murderer, who abstain from crime in order not to fall into the hands of human justice. Therefore, the sinner who returns to God, by attrition, must be resolved not only to avoid hell, but also to offend God no more. His sorrow must be that of a good son who returns to his father, and who promises to be subject to him in future, and not to displease him any more.

2d. *Confidence in God*, or the hope of pardon. This hope is necessary for our justification. If everywhere and at all times we have a right to trust in the divine mercy, with much more reason may we expect God's mercy in the very tribunal of mercy. What an outrage on the goodness of God if a sinner were to lack confidence in God's mercy? Was it not despair that caused the damnation of Cain and Judas? However great and numerous your crimes may be, you must always have confidence. The goodness of God will always be infinitely greater than your malice. It is this sweet confidence which procures such great consolations in the tribunal of penance; and these consolations inspired St. Bernard with the beautiful words: "O my God, if it is so sweet to weep for love of Thee, how sweet must it not be to rejoice with Thee?"

3d. *A Beginning of the Love of God as the Source of All Justice.*— There is a commandment which obliges us to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with all our strength; and nobody can

be saved if he does not observe this first and greatest of all precepts, which contains within itself all the others. If this love of God is necessary at all times, it is especially in the sacrament of penance; for how could God, infinite goodness though He be, pardon one who does not love Him and who refuses to observe His first and greatest commandment?

But if it is always necessary to love God above all things, why do we say that, in order that attrition may be sufficient, *only a beginning of the love of God, considered as a source of all justice*, is required? On this point great discussions had been raised among the theologians. The most commendable opinion is that which draws its reason from the difference which exists between the motives that oblige us to the love of God. Why must we love God above everything? Either because He commands us to love Him under pain of eternal punishment, or on account of the benefits which He confers on us, or, finally, because He is sovereignly perfect and sovereignly amiable. On account of all these motives together, or on account of any one of them, it is necessary to love God above all things. But it need not be for the sole motive of His infinite amiability and perfections. To love Him above everything for this sole motive is to have perfect charity. God does not require this of the sinner. He contents Himself with a beginning of this pure and disinterested love, provided that the latter motive joined to the others makes us love Him more than anything else. In other terms, to pardon us in the sacrament of penance, God is not content that we should love Him on account of the good which we derive from the sacrament; but it is His will that we should also begin to love Him on account of Himself, or on account of His adorable perfections. It is this that we understand when we say, with the Council of Trent, that, for attrition to be sufficient, *one must have a beginning of the love of God as the source of all justice.*

III. Whatever may be the truth in this difficult question, one thing is certain, that it is not sufficient for the sinner to detest sin, on account of hell which he has deserved, but he must have, at least, a beginning of the love of God, and that the more intense this love is the better his attrition will be.

Attrition must be interior, supernatural, sovereign, and universal, like perfect contrition itself; and these two contritions, though they are different in their motives, do not differ at all in their extent. In practice it is not even good to distinguish between the one and the

other. The best is to unite all the motives which can make us detest sin, for fear that, in separating them, our sorrow may not be sufficient.

In order to excite ourselves to contrition, reflect on the grievousness and multitude of your sins; transport yourselves in spirit to the grave, represent to yourselves the suddenness and the ravages of death; think of the judgment of God which follows immediately after death; from thence descend in spirit into hell, to consider those horrible pools of fire which shall be one day your lot, if you die in sin, and then say to yourselves: Where should I go if God were to strike me down in the state in which I am now? How many souls are there in hell that are less guilty than myself? Elevate yourselves in spirit to heaven, and at the sight of the unspeakable joys and delight with which God rewards there the elect, cry out: How could I, for a vain and frivolous pleasure renounce an eternity of happiness? Meditate upon the infinite goodness of God, which has borne with you until now; think of the numberless benefits with which He has overwhelmed you and with which He overwhelms you still every day, and of the frightful ravages which mortal sin makes in the soul, in causing it to lose the friendship of God, in robbing it of all its merits, and causing it to deserve hell.

All these motives I have enumerated are excellent to awaken contrition; but you will do still better if you go in spirit to Mount Calvary, and there, prostrate at the foot of the cross, say to yourself: Why did my Saviour spill even the last drop of His blood? — Out of love for me. What caused Him so many torments? — It was my sins. What do I do every time in committing sin? — I crucify Jesus anew. What malice! what ingratitude! — Finally, consider God sovereignly good in Himself, and the source of all good, of all perfections, of all justice; and cry out with the penitent Augustine: "O goodness, ever ancient and ever new, too late have I commenced to know and love Thee." But now I begin, and in future I desire to love Thee alone, and I will sacrifice my life rather than offend Thee again.

IV. By what marks can true contrition be recognized? No one can be certain of the validity of his contrition. God alone can tell. St. Paul tells us *to work out our salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil. II. 12); and the wise man said: *Man knoweth not whether he is worthy of love or hatred* (Eccl. IX. 1).

Some of the marks of true contrition are: 1st. *A Change of Life.* — Have you ceased to offend God after your confessions? Have you corrected yourselves of your evil habits, such as neglecting your prayers, blaspheming the holy name of God, desecrating the Sunday? Did you, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, after confession, take more care of your children, of your domestics, than you did before? Did you watch over their conduct? Did you rebuke, correct, and edify them, as you ought to do? And you, children and servants, have you been more submissive, more attentive to your duties? You, libertines, have you corrected your shameful vices? You, unjust retainers of others' goods, have you returned your ill-gotten goods and satisfied for your injustices? You, transgressors of the laws of the Church, have you finally come to the decision to observe the laws of fasting and abstinence, to go to confession and communion at least when the precept of the Church obliges?

But, on the contrary, are you the same after confession as you were before? Are you still lukewarm and careless in the service of God, cursers and blasphemers, libertines and drunkards, as before, hateful and full of revenge, rebellious against the laws of the Church? Then, indeed, you may be well afraid that your contrition was not sincere.

2d. *The Will to Repair the Evil One Has Done.* — If you gave scandal by your conduct, and you have tried to repair it as well as possible by your good example; if you were at variance with your neighbor, and you have become reconciled with them; if you have committed injustices, and you have restored all, or, at least, you have taken measures to do this as soon as possible — then your contrition was true. But, if, on the contrary, you have not repaired the injury done, and have not wished to impose upon yourselves any inconvenience or sacrifice to fulfill your obligations, then you may well fear for your confessions, for your contrition was not a true contrition.

3d. *Sincere Efforts to Correct Oneself.* — The sacraments do not, indeed, render us impeccable. In spite of your falls and relapses, your confessions may have been good, if you have combatted with energy the temptations of the devil and the violence of your passions; if you have employed the necessary means of perseverance, such as prayer, mortification, watchfulness. But if you have succumbed to the first attacks, it is a sad and deplorable sign! Your heart is not changed, and you remain always the same.

Finally, a fourth and last mark is, flight from the proximate occasions of sin. Proximate occasions of sin are those which lead you directly into the temptations of sin, and which make you fall almost every time you meet with them. It is evident that you are obliged to flee from such occasions. *He who loves the danger will perish therein* (Eccl. III. 37). It is impossible to preserve yourself pure, if you frequent the company of the wicked and of those who have already been for you the occasion of repeated sins. Do you still visit that person, that house which has been a stumbling-block for you? If you have broken off all unlawful connections and avoided all dangerous places, and occasions, then your contrition has the mark of a true contrition. No one imposes sacrifices of this nature upon himself, without being really converted. But if you have continued, after your confessions, to frequent the same company, if you visit those same wicked persons, if you continue to go into the same dangerous houses, then I am afraid that your contrition was not good, and you may well fear for the state of your soul. If you have a horror of an evil, you will not expose yourself to it; if you are afraid to fall over a precipice, you do not sleep on its brink.

Make a rigorous examination of your past life. If you do not recognize marks of true conversion, and if your conscience reproaches you, go to a kind father confessor and tell him of your state, and he will prescribe the means to repair your previous confessions and to reconcile you with God. But, for the future, be on your guard; try to excite in your heart a true contrition; on this will depend your justification, your progress in virtue, and your salvation. Amen.

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## XVI. INSTRUCTION

### On Confession

The second part of the sacrament of penance is confession. Several instructions will be necessary to explain this important subject. To-day I shall content myself with speaking of its nature, necessity, and advantages. Since the heretics and infidels of the last centuries

have protested so much against the law of confession, and since impious men of our own days often make it the object of their mockery and sarcasm, it is necessary to enlighten you on these essential points.

I. Confession is *an accusation of all one's sins to a duly authorized priest, for the purpose of receiving absolution.*

1st. Confession is *an accusation.* It is not, therefore, a simple recital of one's sins, made by way of conversation, amusement, or ostentation, but a real declaration, made with humility and compunction, before God who knows all, and at the feet of the minister who holds His place.

2d. Confession is an accusation *of all one's sins*, even of the most secret and most humiliating; for one single sin concealed would make confession null and sacrilegious. This must be understood only of mortal sins, because confession of venial sins, although very useful, is not necessary.

3d. Confession must be *made to a priest*, because only the priests have received the power to remit sins. And to a *duly authorized* priest, because, besides the sacerdotal power which the priest receives in his ordination, he must have, moreover, the approbation or the authorization of the bishop, just as it is not sufficient for a magistrate to be named by the government to an office, but the place must also be designated where he should exercise his ministry or jurisdiction.

4th. Confession is made in order *to receive absolution from sin;* because this constitutes, properly speaking, the sacramental confession, and because in making confession the principal end is to obtain a decree of pardon.

II. Is confession necessary for absolution? Yes, it is absolutely necessary.

When our Lord wished to institute the sacrament of penance, He said to His apostles, and, in their person, to all priests who should succeed them in the sacred ministry: *As the Father has sent me, I send you; receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained* (John xx. 23). Undoubtedly, these words signify that the Son of God, in instituting the sacrament of penance, has instituted confession. By these words it is evident that He gives a double power to His apostles and to their successors, the power of remitting sins and that of retaining them, that is, the power to absolve and the

power to condemn. Therefore, they are established as judges of consciences, and the absolution which they grant or refuse is a real sentence of condemnation or of pardon. On the other hand, it is also evident that in the mind of the Saviour there are sins which must be remitted, and others which must be retained, according as the penitent is well or ill disposed. Now, how could the priests know the state of consciences, without confession? How could they distinguish the sins that ought to be remitted and those that should be retained, without confession? How, for instance, could a judge in court acquit or condemn an accused without hearing the witnesses and without a discussion of the facts? When, therefore, our Saviour gave to the priests the double power to remit or to retain sins, He established confession as an indispensable condition for the exercise of this power. Therefore, either there is no sacrament of penance established by our Lord for the remission of sins, or confession was established at the same time by our divine Saviour as a necessary part of the sacrament.

The Church, always infallible in her doctrine, has constantly interpreted these words of Jesus Christ in the sense just indicated. In the sixteenth century, in the holy Council of Trent, she *declared anathema on everyone who would dare to deny that sacramental confession is a divine institution, or that it is necessary for salvation by divine right, or that the manner of confessing secretly to the priest alone, such as the Catholic Church observes it and has always observed it from the very beginning, is not conformable to the institution and to the precept of Christ, but that it is a human invention* (Sess. XIV., Can. 6, 7, 8). Four hundred years earlier, the Council of Lateran, under the most severe penalties, obliged *all the faithful of both sexes, having the use of reason, to go to confession at least once a year.* And if we consult the practice of the preceding centuries, and go back to the time of the apostles; if we consult the writings of the most ancient Fathers, we shall find confession practiced everywhere and always acknowledged as necessary. In the sixth century, St. Gregory the Great, addressing himself to the sinners of his time, said to them: "Why do you hide your sins? Bring them forth in confession. . . . Let the sinner confess his sins, in bringing forth outwardly what is hidden in the most secret recesses of his heart, after which he may be freed from them through the ministry of the priests, as Lazarus was freed by the disciples of the Saviour." In the fifth century, St. Augustine spoke thus: "Let nobody say: 'I do penance in

secret before the eyes of God.' It is not enough to confess to God, 'we must also confess to those who have the power to bind and to loose.'" In the fourth century, St. Basil spoke in the same terms: "One must necessarily reveal his sins to those who have received the power of dispensing God's mysteries." In the third century, St. Cyprian teaches that exomologesis (confession) is necessary according to the discipline established by the Lord. In the second century, Tertullian expresses himself thus: "Will it be more advantageous to condemn yourselves in hiding your sins than to save yourselves in declaring them? . . . To the priests must be made this declaration, for to them is granted the power to absolve." In the first century, St. Clement, disciple of St. Peter, exhorts the faithful who are careful of their souls not to be ashamed to confess their sins to the one who presides over the Church, in order that they may thereby avoid eternal punishment. And he declares that St. Peter himself taught his disciples to confess to the priests even their most secret thoughts. Finally, in the same century, in the very beginning of the Church, St. James and St. John recommend confession to the faithful, and St. Luke tells us, in the Acts of the Apostles, that a great number of believers came to the feet of the apostles to confess their sins: *And many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their sins* (Acts xix. 18).

In the face of so many testimonies and of thousands of others which we could quote, in face of the constant belief and practice of the Church, and of the formal decisions of the Councils, how can any one refuse to acknowledge the divine institution of the sacramental confession and its absolute necessity for salvation?

In case that there is still any one who doubts, I would say: Either it is God Himself who has instituted confession, or it was instituted by men. If it was done by men, by some bishop or pope, then name him, and tell me in what epoch and in what place confession was instituted, for it is impossible that confession should be invented by a man without history preserving the record of the fact. It is impossible that a law so severe and so repugnant to human nature could have been established by a human authority, without any one knowing the date or the author. You cannot point out either the one or the other. Examine history and you will find confession established and practiced everywhere; you find it in the first ages and in the apostolic times; you find it in all the Catholic Churches of the most distant lands as

well as in the very center of Catholicity; you find it among the schismatics and even among many heretical sects, such as the Nestorians, the Eutychians, the Jacobites, and other Oriental sects whose separation dates back to the first centuries of Christianity. From this universality, from this incontestable perpetuity, I conclude that confession has not been established by men, and that it can have only God for author.

Therefore, my brethren, it is proved that confession is of divine institution, that it is of an indispensable necessity to obtain pardon in the sacrament of penance; and that the Church obliges us to have recourse to this sacrament at least once a year. If we are true children of the Church, that is, if we have the desire to save our souls, we should humbly submit ourselves to this holy and inviolable law, we should respect it as coming from the hand of God; and we should deem ourselves happy for having always at our disposal such a powerful means of salvation.

III. "But," you may say, "if confession is necessary, how does it come that there are so many Christians who do not go to confession?" But, in my turn, I would ask you: How comes it that there are so many Christians who are damned? If there are so many who do not go to confession, it is because they have no faith, or because they do not wish to correct their bad habits, or keep away from the proximate occasions of sin, or make restitution of ill-gotten goods. But if there are many who do not go regularly to confession during life, there are very few who do not desire to make their confession at the hour of death.

"But," you may say, "it is so hard and so humiliating to tell to a man with whom one lives sins which are so shameful and so infamous." I do not say that it is not a painful and humiliating thing, but it is precisely to punish and to humble you that confession has been established; it is precisely this confusion and self-abasement which renders confession useful and meritorious. Moreover, if it is an indispensable condition for salvation, and if there is no other alternative but to go to confession or to go to hell, can you hesitate for a moment? Could not God, the Master of all, subject your salvation to still harder conditions? And if, as was the case before the coming of Christ, you should have no other means of forgiveness but perfect contrition, which is so difficult and so rare, would you have been more happy? Of what should you be afraid? The sins which you intrust to a

confessor are buried forever in the most profound secrecy. Both the divine and the ecclesiastical laws oblige the priest to secrecy under punishments so great that he is not tempted to be unfaithful. Even if the priest were threatened with exile and death, he would not fail to keep his secret. Did you ever hear of a confessor who violated the secret of confession? No; I defy the most declared enemy of religion to quote one single example. This is one of the points wherein divine Providence is to be admired. Confessors have been subjected to the most cruel torments in order to force from them what they heard in confession; others have lost their reason and revealed their own sins, but not one of them has ever revealed the secrets of confession.

"But what will my confessor think of me, if I confess such a shameful fault; if I reveal to him all the iniquity of my life?" Ah! my dear brother, what idea have you yourself of your confessor? Do you believe that he does not know, as well as you, all the weaknesses of which man is capable? What will my confessor think of me? Well, the idea which he will have of you is that if you have been a great sinner, you are now a great penitent. He will esteem you all the more; you will be for him a subject of great joy; and, like the blessed in heaven, he will rejoice as much over your conversion as over the perseverance of ninety-nine just. Consider your confessor as a father, as a friend, and as the best of friends. See in him Jesus Christ Himself whose place he holds. Whoever you may be and whatever your crime may be, come with all confidence to confession, and be convinced that the advantages which you shall draw from confession shall fully compensate you for all the pains and all the sacrifices which it might have caused you.

IV. In fact, my brethren, what benefits and what consolations do we not draw from a good confession? The first is the pardon of sins. Is it a small favor to be able to obtain by such an easy means the remission of all our sins, however enormous they might be, and to regain all our rights to heaven? If there were no other motive but this, should we hesitate for an instant to submit ourselves to confession? If there should be some king so good and so indulgent as to promise liberty to all those detained in prison, under condition that they should make an avowal of their crimes to a magistrate who would be bound to the most inviolable secrecy, do you believe that there would be a single one that would not comply with a condition so easy? Why

should it not be the same in regard to confession, since it has the power to preserve us not only from an eternity of torments, but also to merit for us an eternity of happiness?

But confession has other advantages. While purifying us from the sins which we have committed, it is also a preservative to hinder us from committing them anew. The sacramental graces of confession, the salutary advices, instructions, and exhortations of the confessor, the natural shame attached to the accusation of our faults, the penance imposed, are all eminently useful means to subdue our passions, to correct vice, and to maintain the soul in its duty. How many persons of all ages and conditions of life, especially young men and young women, owe their piety, their virtue, and their honor, to confession! We have the experience of this every day, and it is very easy to notice the great difference which exists between the morality, uprightness, and charity of those who go to confession and those who do not. Parents and masters, I appeal to your own testimony, and ask you which of your children or of your servants are more respectful and obedient, with whom are you most satisfied? Are they not those who go freqently to confession?

Confession is the powerful bulwark against the passions, and a sure and efficacious means to avoid sin and to save one's soul. What other services does it not render, either through restitution, or by appeasing hatred and revenge, or maintaining peace and harmony in the household, or stopping criminal relations, and in so many other domestic and social needs! When you are in doubt as to what state of life to adopt, is it not to your confessor that you have recourse? When a child, a husband, or any other person is for you a source of anxiety and makes life hard and bitter, is it not the sweet influence or the charitable advice of a confessor which you seek?

You must admit that there is nothing from which we derive such precious advantages as from confession. It is a great benefit of God. A writer sadly famous has admitted this in a moment of sincerity, for he said that *confession is a divine institution, and had its origin only in the infinite mercy of its author.* (Voltaire). Would that he had always adhered to this sentiment!

To these many advantages of confession, let us add the many consolations which it procures us. Who can express the peace, the calm, the happiness, found in confession! One day an old captain hearing Father Bridaine preach on confession, was so touched that after

the sermon he followed him into the sacristy and threw himself at his feet to make the avowal of his crimes. Having received absolution he could not help expressing his joy, and said to everybody that, in his whole life, he never tasted such a pure and sweet pleasure. And how many others have experienced this more than once! Remember the happy time of a general confession, after having fallen into many disorders; of a retreat, of a jubilee, of a forty hours' devotion. Ah! what sweet joy, what calm, what happiness in your soul!

Is there still any one here who hesitates to fulfill the duty of confession, to have recourse to this source of peace and happiness? It is either confession or damnation — there is no middle road. Without confession — relentless remorses in this life and hell in the other. With confession — joy, peace in this world, and an unspeakable happiness in eternity. Take your choice.

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## XVII. INSTRUCTION

### On Confession (*Cont'd*)

In the preceding instruction I have explained to you the nature, the necessity, and the advantages of confession. In the present and the following instruction I shall speak of the qualities of confession. Confession, in order to be good, must have four qualities: it must be entire, humble, simple, and prudent. Let us limit ourselves to-day to the first and most essential, which is the *integrity*.

I. The holy Council of Trent expresses itself thus, on the first condition of confession: "The penitent is obliged by divine law to confess all and each of his mortal sins which he remembers after a careful examination, as well as the circumstances which change the species of sin" (Sess. xiv.).

To make an *entire* confession is to declare all one's mortal sins as one knows them, with their number and their kind, and, according to the advice of most theologians, with the circumstances notably aggravating them. Consequently, in order to make our confession well, it is not enough to say in a general manner: "I have committed very

many sins; I am a miserable sinner.» You must name the sins which you have committed, telling the number and the circumstances which may change the species, or increase their malice. Without these explanations, without these circumstantial details, it would be impossible for the confessor to judge of the state of your conscience, or know what penance he ought to impose upon you, and whether he should absolve you or not.

Therefore, you must declare: 1st. *The number*. Hence you must tell how many times you have committed every sin; for instance, how many times you have failed to assist at Mass on Sunday; how many times you have fallen into the sin of impurity; how many times you have eaten meat on days of abstinence. Many persons do not know how to explain themselves as to this point. They content themselves with simply naming the sin; and when the confessor asks them how often they committed the sin, they answer: «*A few times.*» But what does that mean? Is it ten or twenty times, or only two or three times? Is it a frequent habit, or only some rare and passing fault? But you may say: «I do not remember any more.» Have you, then, examined your conscience? Have you searched the bottom of your heart? I can understand that if there is question of a confession covering a long time, and especially of a general confession, the matter is difficult. In those cases, it is good to find out how long the habit has lasted, and how many times you fell each day, week, or month, or *about* how many times. God, who is merciful, will require nothing more.

2d. You must name *the different kinds of your sins*. There are cases where by one single action several commandments are transgressed. Thus, if you steal from the Church, the circumstance of the Church makes the sin a double one; a sin against the seventh commandment which forbids theft, and a sin against the first which forbids sacrilege. It changes the species. You ill-treat a father, a mother; the circumstance of relationship makes it a double sin; one against the fifth commandment, and one against the fourth; it changes the species. If a father of a family becomes drunk, and his children are witnesses of his intemperance, he sins against the virtue of temperance and against the fourth commandment which obliges parents to give good example to their children, and severely forbids them to scandalize them. You are obliged to declare such circumstances in your confession.

3d. Finally, you must declare any *notably aggravating circumstances*, that is, such as render the sin much greater in the same species. These circumstances are seven in number: *circumstances of person*, *of action*, *of place*, *of means employed*, *of motives*, *of manner*, and *of time*.

Circumstance *of person*.—If you have stolen anything, was it from a poor or rich person? If you have spoken injurious language, how many persons did you offend, and who were these persons?

Circumstance *of action*.—This relates to the quantity, the matter, the intention, etc. You have stolen only a small sum of money; but had you not the intention of stealing a large sum? You calumniated somebody; but was it in a grievous or a slight matter?

Circumstance *of place*.—Did you commit indecent actions, did you give yourselves up to anger, in a sacred place? This circumstance changes the sin to a sacrilege.

Circumstance *of means*.—You accuse yourselves of being revengeful. By what means did you revenge yourselves? Was it through backbiting, or through calumny, or through bad treatment? You have won a lawsuit unjustly; but was it by employing false witnesses, or by false signatures?

Circumstance *of motives*.—You have calumniated somebody; but was it through revenge, or through jealousy, or merely in idle talk?

Circumstance *of manner*.—You have struck somebody; but how did you strike him or wish to strike him? What instruments did you employ? And did you do so without premeditation, or with full deliberation?

Circumstance *of time*.—You nourished a hatred against somebody; but how long did that hatred last? You had willful distractions during Mass, during prayer; how long did they last?

It is not an easy thing to remember all these details; it takes time and reflection. You must make a serious examination of conscience. In order to recall your faults more easily, you may think of the places where you have been, the persons with whom you lived, those whom you met or visited, and the affairs in which you were engaged. You should be especially careful to examine yourselves on your predominant passion, which is the source of many other sins.

II. If it is necessary to confess all mortal sins in confession, is it also necessary to confess the venial sins?

No, my brethren, it is not necessary, because venial sins do not cause us to lose that state of grace, and, besides, there are other means to obtain their pardon, such as acts of contrition or of love of God, communion, fasting, alms-giving, etc.

But it is, nevertheless, often wise and wholesome to confess venial sins, because the sacrament of penance has been instituted to remit all sins, great and small, and, consequently, confession is the best means to purify us from them.

Another reason why it is good to confess venial sins is, because in accusing yourselves of them, you learn to know them; and because the confessor may give you excellent advice to aid you in avoiding them.

It is often prudent to confess them, because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish a mortal from a venial sin. The greatest theologians themselves have often been embarrassed in this matter. By omitting a grievous sin which you believed to be only a venial sin, you would expose yourself to make a bad confession. But in confessing venial sins, conceiving a sincere sorrow for them, and forming a good purpose of amendment, you follow the surest course.

The absolution would be void and sacrilegious if, having only venial sins to confess, you had no contrition for any of them; for, then, there would be no sufficient matter for the sacrament. Hence, I would advise those pious persons, who hardly ever commit grievous sins, to mind this observation: If you do not feel true contrition, at least for some of your venial sins, you should not permit the confessor to give you absolution; or if you desire to receive absolution, you should accuse yourself of some grievous fault of your past life, for which you have true contrition.

III. Does the omission of one or more mortal sins, through forgetfulness, render the confession null and sacrilegious? No, provided the forgetfulness is not voluntary, and that the examination has been sufficient, the confession is good, and all your sins, whether they have been mentioned or not, are alike remitted. You need not even accuse yourselves if you remember them before communion. But you must include them in your next confession, if they come to your mind. But if grievous sins are forgotten on account of a careless examination, or because you did not bring to confession the proper preparation, recollection, and reflection, the case is quite different, and a confession thus made with haste and levity might only add a sacrilege to your former sins, and put you under the obligation to repeat the confession.

With much more reason would you be obliged to do this, if you have hidden one of your sins willfully and through some false shame. In this case, if you have received absolution, you have committed an abominable crime, and the remedy which was expected to heal you from your evils has been changed into a deadly poison. May God preserve you from such a misfortune! It would be thousands of times better for you if you had not gone to confession at all. However shameful, however horrible your sins may be, do not be afraid to confess them. Your confessor is a gentle father and a compassionate friend who will not fail to receive you with kindness and leniency. Do not say: "But I am afraid that my confessor will scold me." No, a confessor never scolds in such a case; on the contrary, when the penitent is already confounded with the sense of his own guilt, the confessor has only words of encouragement. "But they are sins into which I have fallen so often." No matter, if you tell him that you wish to correct and convert yourselves, you will see that he will limit himself to pointing out to you the means of conversion, and exhorting you to perseverance in your generous resolution. "But they are sins which regard the confessor himself; I have a hatred against him, I have spoken evil against him." But you need not say that you have calumniated him, or nourished against him sentiments of hatred; it is sufficient to declare that you have spoken ill of a priest. . . . And even if you did tell him that it was himself, do not be afraid; a confessor, remembering that he holds the place of Jesus Christ, easily forgets personal offenses. "But I have deceived my confessor so often! I have concealed from him my sins so long!" Then because you have deceived your confessor for so long a time, must you deceive him still longer; must you deceive him always? Besides, if you have such a great repugnance to confessing shameful faults to your ordinary confessor, nothing prevents you from going to another confessor. The essential thing is that you make your confession, although it is better to confess to the same priest who knows the state of your soul, and does not need to have you renew your confessions. But, finally, you will say: "I shall confess it later on." But if you must do it some day, why not do it now? Why not rid yourselves as soon as possible of those remorses which rend your soul and make you unfortunate? Do you not see that by putting it off you render yourself more guilty? And, as it so often happens, death may overtake you in your sin!

May God preserve you from false shame! When you go to confession, be afraid of only one thing, namely, not to know yourselves sufficiently. And if, unfortunately, you have hidden any mortal sin, do not remain in this wretched state; go to confession as soon as possible, make a sincere avowal, and do penance for all your sins. You will thereby regain your peace of soul and the grace of God, and place yourselves again in the road which leads to salvation, a blessing I wish to you with all my heart. Amen.

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## XVIII. INSTRUCTION

### On Confession (*Concluded*)

We have spoken already of integrity, the first quality of confession, and the only one absolutely necessary. But, in order that it may be well made, and that it may produce all its effects, confession should also be humble, simple, and prudent.

I. Confession must be *humble*. This humility must be both interior and exterior. Interiorly, the sinner should regard himself as a criminal before his judge, as a rebellious subject before his king, as a vile creature before his Creator. This kind of humility hardly differs from contrition or interior compunction. The motives are the same.

Besides this humility of heart, exterior humility of the body is also required. 1st. Humility in *dress*. The dress should be simple and modest. If women were to present themselves at the tribunal of penance with that luxury and vanity of dress which rather becomes a worldly festival than the fulfillment of a religious duty, they would show that they have not in their hearts sentiments of true contrition, and that they do not understand what they are doing when they come to cast themselves at the feet of the priest.

2d. Humility in *behavior*. In the confessional the penitent should be kneeling, with hands joined, and eyes modestly lowered. The publican, at the entrance of the temple, prostrated himself on the ground, striking his breast and crying out: "Lord, be merciful to

me, a sinner." Let him serve here as the model of a truly humble penitent.

3d. Humility in *language*. Do not speak of your good qualities, nor of your virtues, nor of your good works, as the Pharisee in the Gospel did. Why do you come to confession except to tell your miseries to your confessor and to receive his charitable advice?

A very common fault in confession, one which is opposed to humility, and which it is well to mention here, is the deplorable habit which certain persons have of always excusing their sins and throwing the blame on some one else. "I accuse myself," says this woman, "of having become angry; but my husband was the cause of it." The husband comes, in his turn, and says: "I was angry; but my wife was the cause." "Father," says the drunkard, "I was intoxicated; but my companions made me drink too much." "Father," says another, "I bear a hatred against that person, we do not speak to one another; but I have done nothing to him, whilst he never ceases to wrong me and to speak ill of me." I ask you whether this is confessing with humility? When you come to the sacred tribunal, is it to accuse others or to accuse yourself?*

You must never excuse yourselves in the confessional at the expense of others. Tell your own faults, such as you know them, and go no further.

II. Confession must be *simple*. It must be simple in omitting all useless details, and simple in declaring your sins as you know them, without exaggerating nor diminishing them. Cut short all those long details, those stories which only tax the patience of the confessor and of the persons waiting for their turn. Without speaking either of your troubles, or of your embarrassments, or of anything that does not belong to the confessional, declare your sins simply by saying: Father, I accuse myself of having neglected my prayers (*how often*), of having lied (*how often*), etc. If it happens that you have to ask the advice of your confessor, or to tell him of certain troubles, do this only after confession; or, rather, choose some day when there are not many persons at the confessional.

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*Listen to how a confessor once corrected a woman who confessed all the evil she knew of her husband, but who said not a word of her own faults. "For your sins," said the confessor, "you will say one Hail Mary, and for those of your husband you will fast every day for one month." "But, father, do you expect me to do penance for the sins of my husband?" "Well," answered the confessor, "why did you mention them?"

You must declare your sins just as you know them, without increasing or diminishing them. To accuse yourselves of more faults than you have committed would be telling a lie; it would be committing another sin. Not to tell all the sins you have committed would be failing in the integrity of confession, and you would expose yourself to the danger of making a null or a sacrilegious confession. There are persons who would not like to deceive a confessor, but who tell their faults and palliate them in such a manner that the confessor is tempted to believe them innocent, although sometimes they are exceedingly guilty. This disguise and this studied manner of accusation do not agree at all with that simplicity, that candor, and that good faith which everyone should bring to the sacred tribunal of penance. With much more reason would you fail in simplicity if, having grievous faults to confess, you should go now to one confessor and then to another by whom you are not known, keeping for your ordinary confessor only slight faults. If it were a question of rare sins, and if you should tell them all clearly and distinctly to the new confessor, all would be well. But when there is question of inveterate habits, when you accuse yourselves with bad faith and with the intention of deceiving the confessor about the state of your conscience, it is quite a different thing, and I would advise those penitents to make their confessions over again and to repair the sacrilege which they may have committed. There may be, at times, legitimate reasons for going to an extraordinary confessor; but to change confessors because your ordinary confessor makes you submit to some trials before admitting you to the sacraments, or because it is his duty to give you some wholesome advice, to oblige you to avoid certain occasions of sin, to make restitution, or to correct yourselves of some bad habit, is a condemnable frivolity, and I am much afraid that it is not the spirit of God or a sincere desire of your salvation that moves you to look for another confessor. Young men or young women commence to frequent bad company, to practice vice; behold them keeping away from the confessor who knows them, and looking for another who does not know them, imagining that the latter will be more tolerant, or that he will say nothing. A confessor who will say nothing! Do you believe that a confessor would damn himself for the pleasure of gaining your confidence? Or do you imagine that each confessor has his own weight and measure, each his own particular standard of morals? No, my brethren, the principles are the same for all; and if the confessor is deceived, it is

you who deceive him, as if you believed that in deceiving men, you could deceive God Himself.

III. Confession must be *prudent;* prudent in the words used, prudent in regard to the sins of others, prudent as to the advice given by the confessor.

1st. Confession must be prudent *in the words used.* In confessing oaths, curses, or blasphemies, it is not necessary to repeat the odious words, but it is sufficient to tell the first letter or the first syllable of the word, or to declare in general that you have blasphemed the holy name of God, etc. When there is question of sins against modesty, you must choose the most reserved expressions, without, however, disguising anything. As everything is grievous in this matter, you must specify the faults, and explain whether they were immodest thoughts, or desires, or actions, and what actions; but always in well-chosen terms.

2d. Confession must be prudent in regard to *the sins of others.* In your confessions you must never reveal the sins of others, except in case of absolute necessity; for detraction is no more permitted in the confessional than elsewhere. When you are obliged to name the sins of others, in order to make known the kind of sin you have committed, or the danger in which you find yourselves, you must even then make use of all possible reserve, and limit yourselves to telling whether the accomplice — who must never be named — is married or not, is a relative or not, and whether or not you live in the same house.

Here a question of great importance offers itself. If you have overheard something of another's confession, would it be allowed to repeat to others what you heard? Certainly not, you would commit a sin if you should do so. You must not only not repeat what you have heard, but you must not listen to others telling what they heard of another's confession, nor should you try to hear anything at the confessional. When there is a crowd about the confessional, or when the confessor or penitent is obliged, for some reason or other, to speak loud, you must keep at a distance, if possible, or so manage as to hear nothing. All that passes in confession is sacred and obliges everyone to secrecy.

3d. Confession must be prudent *relatively to the advice given by the confessor.* You are bound to secrecy in regard to the advice which your confessor gives you. You cannot speak of it to others, except to

serve for their edification. Your sin would be greater or less, according as the indiscretion would be of a nature to compromise either confession or the confessor. If the confessor is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to absolute secrecy as to all the confidences which you intrust to him, why should you not be bound to secrecy in regard to the observations which he makes to you, and to the counsels which he gives to you? This is especially true when there is question of delicate matters in which the least imprudence might give occasion to criticism and blasphemy. Those persons are very blameworthy who have the habit of speaking about confession and confessors. "My confessor is very good and easy." "My confessor is strict." "What did your confessor say?" "What penance did he give you?" Such conversation is entirely out of place, and may give rise to harsh and unjust criticisms.

Make it a rule never to make confession the subject of your conversation. If sometimes you mention confession or the confessor, let it be done only with the view to edify, and with all reserve and respect, being most careful not to mention anything, either of the counsels or of the prohibitions that were given to you, or even of the penance that was imposed on you.

IV. These are, therefore, the four qualities which confession must have. It must be entire, humble, simple, and prudent. What defects do you not find, perhaps, in your confessions? Pay attention to them; for to what good would all your confessions be, if you did not make them with the required conditions? Confession is a sure and efficacious means which God in His mercy has given us for our sanctification. If you make a good and holy use of the sacrament of penance, there is every reason to believe that you will be saved. But, on the contrary, you would convert a remedy into a poison, and you would run great risk of damnation, if you did not bring to confession the necessary dispositions.

V. How is confession to be made? After having made the sign of the cross, you say: "Bless me, father, for I have sinned." Then recite the *Confiteor* up to the words, "Through my fault." Tell the time you made your last confession, and whether you said the penance. Then tell the sins you may have forgotten in your last confession. After this, you accuse yourselves of the new faults which you may have committed, being careful to specify their number and circumstances, and then add: "Father, this is all I remember, but I accuse myself in

general of all the sins I may have forgotten, as well as of those of my past life; I ask pardon of God, and of you, father, penance and absolution"; then listen attentively and respectfully to the advice which your confessor gives you, and avoid interrupting him. Receive with submission the penance which the priest imposes upon you; and when he gives you absolution, bow down your head and say the act of contrition (*in such a manner that the confessor can hear you*) from the bottom of your heart, and with sentiments of humility and compunction. Having left the confessional, kneel before the Blessed Sacrament and thank God for the graces which He has granted you, recall to your mind the advice that was given to you, and renew the resolutions which you have taken. Perform your penance immediately, if you have time to do so, or if it should be performed at that time, and then withdraw with recollection and modesty.

If you faithfully practice all that I have told you in this instruction, you will make worthy and holy confessions, and the sacrament of penance will turn you away from evil, lead you to do good, and confirm you in the way of life. You will make constant progress in virtue, and you will receive the reward promised to the pure of heart. Amen.

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## XIX. INSTRUCTION

### On Satisfaction

I. By *satisfaction*, we understand, in general, the repairing of the outrage or of the wrong one has done to another.

We will consider satisfaction in regard *to God* and satisfaction in regard *to our neighbor*. Satisfaction to God consists in prayers or good works performed willingly, or imposed by the priest in the sacrament of penance, for the punishment due to sin.

Satisfaction to our neighbor is the reparation of the damage one has caused him in his person, in his goods, or in his honor.

I have already spoken of the necessity of repairing the wrong which one may have caused to his neighbor in the explanation of the fifth, seventh, and eighth commandments. Let it suffice to say that,

in order to obtain pardon in the sacrament of penance, it is necessary to have, at least, the intention of rendering satisfaction to one's neighbor as soon as possible, and as well as one is able; otherwise, if the matter is grievous, one would sin against justice or charity, and would be unworthy of absolution.

In this instruction we shall consider satisfaction as the reparation of the injury which we have committed against God by sin, and which, taken in this sense, constitutes one of the three acts of the penitent which the holy Council of Trent declared to be the matter of the sacrament of penance, essential to our reconciliation in this sacrament.

II. The sacrament of penance, in remitting our sins, does not always remit the entire punishment due to sin. In sin there are two things: *the guilt*, that is, the offense against God, and *the punishment* which the sin merits for us. In other words, sin first makes us lose sanctifying grace, and, secondly, renders us deserving of the eternal flames. In order to restore himself to the state of grace in which he was before sin, the sinner has two things to do; first, to reconcile himself with God, and, second, to expiate the punishment which his sin has deserved. By virtue of the sacrament of penance, the sinner may obtain his perfect reconciliation with God. But the punishment due to sin is remitted only in part; the eternal punishment which he had deserved is commuted to a temporal punishment. If he should happen to die in this state, he would not, indeed, be damned, but before entering into heaven he would have to undergo punishment in purgatory. Therefore, after you have obtained your pardon in the sacrament of penance, there remains for you, *at least ordinarily*, a punishment to undergo, either in this world or in the next. I say *ordinarily*, because it might happen that your contrition is sufficient to acquit you altogether before the justice of God. A *sovereignly perfect love*, or *a perfect contrition*, effaces all our faults without obliging us to undergo any temporal punishment. But perfect love and perfect contrition are rare. As a general rule, there remains some temporal punishment after the sin has been forgiven. This has been decided by the Council of Trent, and an anathema has been declared against any one who dares to maintain the contrary.

III. But why does the all-merciful God, in remitting our sins in the sacrament of penance, not remit, at the same time, all the punishment due to sin; and why is it not with the sacrament of penance as with that of baptism, which leaves nothing in the soul that can

hinder it from entering immediately into the kingdom of heaven? The reason of this, my brethren, is that God desires the life of a Christian to be a life of mortification and penance, and, moreover, the practice of penance is a means sovereignly efficacious in subduing our passions, preserving us from vice, and maintaining us in the practice of virtue.

If we consult the Old Testament we shall see that God, in pardoning the sins of men, afflicted them with some punishment. Adam and Eve were pardoned for their sin, as is commonly believed, and still they were condemned to a life of labor and suffering. Moses, that great servant of God, was pardoned for his disobedience, and still he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. David was admonished by the prophet Nathan that God had forgiven his sin, but that, in punishment for it, his son was to die.

And, under the New Law, the law of grace, the saints always practiced penance, and often the most austere penance. Consider the mortifications and penances of St. Peter and St. Mary Magdalen after the remission of their sins! What severe punishments did not the anchorites in the desert impose upon themselves! And to-day, to what privations and sacrifices do not religious men and women in cloisters, and so many fervent Christians in the world, condemn themselves!

Protestants deny the necessity of penance, saying that Jesus Christ, in dying for us, has sufficiently satisfied for our sins. But they have to repudiate the examples of all the saints, the teaching of the Church, and the spirit of the Christian religion, which is essentially a religion of mortification and penance. Undoubtedly, Jesus Christ has satisfied for us, but He has left it to us to apply to ourselves the merits of His passion by our mortifications and our good works.

IV. It is, therefore, an established truth that, after the remission of our sins, there remains for us a punishment to undergo, either in this world or in purgatory. But how can we expiate this punishment, or, in other words, how can we render the satisfaction which God requires of us? We can do this in three ways: 1st. By voluntary works of penance; 2d. By bearing the crosses and afflictions which God sends to us; 3d. By performing the penance which our confessor imposes upon us.

1st. *Voluntary works* are of three kinds: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

By *prayer*, we understand all vocal or mental prayer, assistance at divine service, pious readings, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, holy aspirations to God, the Way of the Cross, etc. If all these practices are done in a spirit of penance, and offered up in expiation of our sins, they are accepted by God as an excellent satisfaction. Thereby we satisfy particularly for the sins committed against piety and the respect due to God.

*Fasting* comprises all curtailment of nourishment, privations of even permitted pleasures, macerations of our body, mortification of the passions, and, in general, of all the senses, such as the eyes, ears, and tongue. By that penance we satisfy, especially, for our sins of sensuality.

*Alms-giving* comprises all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, such as the assistance of the poor, the care of the sick, the instruction of the ignorant. Thereby we satisfy, especially, for the sins committed by a too great attachment to the goods of this world.

2d. By our *daily sufferings*. . . . In this world we are exposed to many trials and many sufferings. Such is the order of Providence, and nobody is exempted from these daily afflictions. They are an excellent means of satisfying God for our sins. Accept all these punishments, all these tribulations, with resignation and patience, bear them in union with Jesus Christ, and you shall acquire treasures of merits. It is the same with the work you are doing every day; it serves to expiate your sins and increases your merits if you have no other end but the glory of God and the salvation of your soul. St. Theresa said that one day passed in patience and resignation is worth as much as forty days of fasting on bread and water. But, alas! is it with these sentiments of submission to God that you suffer and labor? You suffer, because you have to suffer; you labor, because you have to labor, and you often complain of everything that inconveniences and crosses you, without thinking for a moment that it is God who condemns you to this. If you do not labor and suffer for God, of what use will be all your fatigues and sufferings, except to render you more guilty and to increase your debts to the divine justice?

3d. But of all the means of penance, the most efficacious and most meritorious is the penance which the confessor imposes upon you. In fact, this penance constitutes the "satisfaction," which is the third part of the sacrament of penance. The other works of penance produce grace only on account of the dispositions of the one who performs

them, but the sacramental penance produces grace through itself, and without any exterior help.

V. The confessor is bound to impose a penance upon each penitent, otherwise he would fail grievously in his duty, except the omission should be through involuntary forgetfulness. Since satisfaction is an essential part of the sacrament of penance, would it not be mutilating the sacrament and, consequently, profaning it, if the satisfaction were omitted? The confessor in the sacred tribunal of penance exercises the functions of judge and physician. Now, must not the judge inflict a punishment upon everyone accused whom he finds guilty; and must not a physician prescribe a remedy to a sick person whom he believes to be in need of it?

What kind of penance should a wise confessor impose? The holy Council of Trent answers that he must impose penances which are *becoming*, *salutary*, *and proportionate* to the quality of the sins and to the nature of the penitent. Hence, the confessor must impose penances more or less great, according to the number and enormity of the sins. Of course, he must consider the situation of each one; his occupation, his instruction, and his temperament. But the penance must be serious and proportionate to the sins committed. They should even be *specific and medicinal*, and in direct opposition to the vices of the penitent. Practices of humility are opposed to pride, almsgiving to avarice, mortification to luxury and intemperance. Then a well-chosen penance ought to produce a double effect: to punish for past sins, and to preserve from future sins.

VI. If time permitted, I would need go only through the history of the penances which the Church imposed in the first centuries, in order to give you an idea of what sacramental penance ought to be; for the Church, being infallible in her discipline, as well as in her dogma, we must believe that her canonical penances were perfectly proportionate to the sins committed. These penances were of two kinds: public penances, imposed only for public sins; and secret penances, imposed for secret sins.

When a public sinner, guilty of some great crime, such as adultery or homicide, desired absolution, he was condemned to four trials or degrees. The first degree consisted in standing at the entrance of the Church, in a supplicating posture, and recommending oneself to the prayers of the faithful who entered; these were the *weepers*. The second degree consisted in stopping at the door of the Church

and listening to the instructions, after which they were obliged to leave the Church; these were called the *hearers*. The third degree consisted in prostrating oneself on the ground, during the prayers which the bishop, the clergy, and the faithful, made for the sinners, from the beginning of Mass until to the Gospel, after which they were also excluded from the Church; these were the *kneelers*. The fourth degree consisted in being deprived of the sacraments, although they could assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, until they had completed the course of penance; these were the *assistants*.

Each of these trials lasted two or three years or more, according to the enormity of the crimes committed. During the first two trials no special penitential works or particular prayers were imposed, because these two degrees were only a preparation for the public penance; but, during the last two degrees, all amusements were forbidden to the sinner, and prayers, fasting, and alms-giving were prescribed in proportion to the grievousness of the sin. Such was the discipline of the public penances.

The secret penances were also graduated according to the grievousness of the sin. Thus, talking in Church was punished with ten days of fasting on bread and water; a non-observance of a fast, with twenty days on bread and water; cursing one's parents, with forty days; ridiculing the advice of a pastor, with forty days; the crime of fornication, with one year of penance; adultery, with three years and sometimes more; deliberate homicide, with twenty years.

These penances which the ancient canons imposed appear rigorous, but how well calculated were they to make known the enormity of the crime and to preserve from a relapse! And was it not better to do penance in this world than to be obliged to suffer in purgatory?

To-day disorders having increased, and sins having multiplied, and faith having become weakened, the Church, out of regard for the weakness of her children, is obliged to be more lenient with sinners. She believes that it is better to send sinners to purgatory than to let them fall into hell; but although her discipline has changed, her spirit is always the same; the temporal punishment which you have to undergo for your sins does not change, and if you do not do penance in this world, you have to do it in the next. Do not imagine that you have satisfied for your sins by performing the very lenient penances which confessors impose upon you to-day in the sacrament of penance. What are a few prayers and a little pious reading, or a few slight

mortifications, in comparison with the number and enormity of your sins? Remember that confessors are always careful to add that they "leave the rest to your devotion," so as to make you understand that it belongs to you to supplement the sacramental penance by voluntary prayer and mortification.

A penitent is rigorously bound to fulfill the penance imposed upon him in confession. The penance is an essential part of the sacrament, and the obligation of performing it is so great that the confessor could not give you absolution if you refused to accept the penance. If it is impossible for you to perform the penance imposed, you ought to inform your confessor, who certainly will be very willing to change it. Be faithful and exact in performing the penance imposed upon you in confession. But how often is it not omitted, or performed badly! You commit a sin every time you neglect your penance, and the sin is in proportion to the grievousness of the sin confessed.

How should the sacramental penance be performed? It should be performed entirely, in the appointed time, with attention and devotion.

1st. *Entirely.*—You are not permitted to omit the least part of it; you cannot even change anything of what has been prescribed to you. If you should happen to forget it, you must ask the confessor to tell you the penance again, or to give you another.

2d. *In the Time Appointed.*—If the penance lasts fourteen days, you must perform it for fourteen days; if it lasts until your next confession, you must continue it until the next confession. If the confessor has prescribed to you a certain prayer for the moment of rising, or of going to bed, or of temptation, you must be faithful in saying it. If no particular time is appointed for the penance, you ought to perform it as soon as possible.

3d. *With Attention and Devotion.*—To act otherwise would not be satisfying for your sins. If the penance is a prayer, say it on your knees, and pronounce the words carefully; if it is some pious reading, it is not necessary to pronounce the words aloud.

You have heard, my brethren, in what satisfaction consists; of the obligation to render satisfaction to the divine justice either in this world or in the next, and of the means which God in His infinite mercy has given us for this purpose. You have seen how great were the penances which the Church formerly imposed upon sinners, and with what zeal the saints practiced mortification and penance. Have

the same courage, the same spirit of penance and sacrifice; you, especially, sinners, who may have great crimes to expiate. Prayer, fasting, alms-giving, and sacramental penance are the means of satisfaction, but, especially, the sacramental penance. Remember that you are the disciples of a God whose life was a continual cross and martyrdom, and that there is no other road to heaven but that of Calvary. St. John of the Cross, who, during his whole life, was a model of penance, cried out at the hour of death: "O penances, austerities, sacrifices, and mortifications, what a joy and happiness do you cause me now!" May these sentiments be yours! May you all at the hour of death have expiated all your debts to the divine justice, and merit, by your mortification and penance, to enter immediately into the heaven of peace and happiness. Amen.

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## XX. INSTRUCTION

### On Indulgences

I. In the preceding instruction I told how after our sins have been remitted in the sacrament of penance, there generally remains a punishment to undergo either in this world or in the next; and I gave you an idea of what this punishment would be by telling you of the canonical penances which the Church formerly imposed. I have added that we satisfy this penance in three ways: by voluntary works, by the daily afflictions which God sends us, provided we accept them with patience and resignation, and, especially, by sacramental penance.

These three means, my brethren, are most efficacious in acquitting ourselves of our debts to the justice of God. However, it is easy to understand that in many cases they are insufficient, either on account of our weakness and our laxity in doing good, or on account of the number and grievousness of our sins, or on account of the suddenness of death which often does not allow us sufficient time to do penance.

To supply the defect of all these means, and to put us in the state to expiate this punishment entirely, even in this world, in order that

at our death there may be nothing that can hinder us from entering heaven, what has the Church, like a good and tender mother, done for us? She has opened to us the treasury of indulgences, by applying to us the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the Saints, and in enabling us to acquit our debt by means of all these merits.

II. To understand this point of doctrine, we must consider: 1st. That Jesus Christ has done and suffered beyond what was necessary to redeem us. This superabundance of satisfaction is infinite, because one single drop of the blood of Christ, one single sigh of His heart, would have been sufficient to redeem thousands of worlds a thousand times more guilty than ours. 2d. That there are in heaven many saints who, upon earth, by their extraordinary penances, by their works of charity, by their many prayers, did much more than was necessary to expiate the slight faults which they had committed. What a superabundance of merits must not the Blessed Virgin have acquired through her holy and perfect life. and having not the least stain of sin to expiate!

All these satisfactions or all these superabundant merits of Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Virgin, and of the saints, have been gathered by the Church into her spiritual treasury, from which, as from an immense reservoir, we may draw, in order to supply what is wanting in our personal satisfactions.

III. Now, it will be easy for you to understand what is an indulgence. It is the remission, granted by the Church, of the entire temporal punishment, or a part of that punishment which we would be obliged to undergo for the sins which we have committed, and this remission is secured by the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and the saints. Thus, an indulgence is nothing else but a supplement of the sacrament of penance, which the Church places at our disposal to complete our satisfaction to God's justice for our sins.

Indulgences are great benefits, and benefits which are generally not sufficiently appreciated. What is more advantageous, indeed, to a sinner, who has accumulated debt upon debt, than to be enabled to satisfy for them, in whole or in part, in a manner so prompt and so easy, and thus to escape the flames of purgatory, or, at least, to shorten the duration of his punishment in this world.

IV. The Church received from Jesus Christ the power to grant indulgences, when He said to His apostles, and in their person to

their successors: *Whatsoever you shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. xvi. 19). These words are clear and confer upon the Church the power to remove every obstacle that would hinder us from entering heaven. The apostle St. Paul made use of this power in favor of the incestuous Corinthian, and, since the apostolic times down to our days, the Church has taught and practiced the doctrine of indulgences.

V. Does the Church, in granting to us these favors, wish to dispense us from doing penance? God forbid! Since the practice of mortification and penance constitutes the very essence of the Christian life, it would not be even in her power to dispense us from satisfying for our sins. Far from desiring to relieve us from such a grave obligation, the Church, on the contrary, preaches penance, and declares that if we do not lead a penitent and mortified life, we shall certainly be lost: *Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish* (Luke xiii. 5). But she sees, on one hand, the extent of our indebtedness to God, and, on the other, our great weakness; she knows how few would be willing to submit themselves to those long penances of seven years, of ten years, of twenty years, and sometimes of an entire life, which the sacred canons imposed in the first centuries, and which are held to represent the satisfaction required by the divine justice; she, therefore, comes to our assistance and enables us to secure a remission of this debt, or of a portion of it, provided that we humbly submit ourselves to the conditions which she requires.

VI. Who has the power to grant indulgences? Only the Pope and the bishops; the Pope for the entire Church, and the bishops in their respective dioceses. No priest can grant indulgences, because this power belongs to jurisdiction, and not to the sacerdotal character, and because jurisdiction has been given only to bishops and the Pope. Priests have no powers but those that are delegated to them by the bishops.

VII. How many kind of indulgences are there? Two kinds: partial indulgences and plenary indulgences.

A partial indulgence is one which remits a part of the temporal punishment due to sin; for example, forty days, one hundred days, one year, ten years, etc. We must not understand by this one hundred days or ten years in purgatory, but only one hundred days or ten years of penance which one would have been obliged to undergo according to the ancient penitential canons and of the corresponding

punishment in purgatory, whose extent we do not know. The bishops can grant indulgences of forty days only, or, at the consecration of a Church, of one year.

A plenary indulgence is one which remits all the temporal punishment due to sin. If, therefore, one gains a plenary indulgence, and receives a perfect application thereof, he is entirely purified from his faults and freed from all temporal punishment, and if he dies in this happy state, he will enter immediately into heaven. But affection for venial sin often hinders the gaining of an indulgence in its plentitude, because venial sins for which one keeps an affection are not effaced, and, consequently, the indulgence cannot remit the punishment that is due to them; one obtains only the remission of the punishment of the mortal sins already pardoned, or of the venial sins for which one has real contrition. Only the Pope or the bishops assembled in a general council can grant plenary indulgences.

Among the partial and plenary indulgences we distinguish personal and real indulgences. Personal indulgences are those which are attached to one or several persons, like those which are granted to religious communities or confraternities. The members of these pious associations can gain them everywhere when they fulfill the prescribed conditions. Real indulgences are those which are attached to certain objects, like crosses, rosaries, medals. These various objects lose the indulgences when one gives them to another person, after having retained them in his possession or after one has once made use of them. The indulgences attached to them are only for those for whom they were blessed, or to whom they were given the first time.

There are also indulgences which are only for the living, and others which one can apply to the dead. The first ones are granted by "way of absolution," for as long as we are in this world the Church can absolve us from our sins, and remit the punishment due to them. The others can be given only by "way of suffrages," that is, through the mediation and the prayers of the faithful, because when we are dead the Church has no longer any jurisdiction over us. The bulls which grant the indulgences always explain whether they are for both the living and the dead, or for the living only. In order that the indulgence may be applied more surely to the dead, it is good to have in mind a particular person, and to ask God for his deliverance from purgatory. But it would be rash to imagine that each time one gains a plenary indulgence for the dead one frees a soul from

purgatory, because all depends on the state in which this soul found itself at the moment of death. We do not know whether it had obtained the pardon of its venial sins or not; and the plenary indulgence which is applied to it can remit only the temporal punishment due to its pardoned sins. How many unfortunate souls there are for whom many indulgences have been gained and many masses offered, and who, nevertheless, are still in need of our help and of our prayers!

Among the plenary indulgences, the principal and most solemn is that of the jubilee, on account of the extraordinary privileges attached to it. There are two sorts of jubilees: the ordinary jubilee which takes place every twenty-five years, and the extraordinary jubilee which is granted on particular occasions, such as the accession of a new Pope, or in some great need of the universal Church or of some particular Church.

During the time of a jubilee every one is authorized to make his confession to any duly approved priest. Confessors can then absolve sinners from the most enormous crimes, even from those whose remission is ordinarily reserved to the Pope, and they are also authorized to commute simple vows, with the exception of vows of chastity and of religion, and from those which involve an obligation accepted by a third party.

A jubilee has always been considered as one of the most signal graces which God in His mercy can grant to us, and as one of the epochs of life most favorable to conversion and penance. Woe to the one who will not profit thereby!

VIII. What are the conditions necessary to gain indulgences? They are three in number: 1st. The state of grace; 2d. The intention to gain the indulgence; and 3d. The fulfillment of the works prescribed by the one who grants the indulgence.

1st. *The State of Grace.*—If a sin is not pardoned it is impossible to obtain the remission of the punishment due to it. Therefore, before all, it is indispensable to be in the state of grace. However, it is not necessary to perform, in the state of grace, all the works prescribed to gain the indulgence. It is sufficient to be in the state of grace when one performs the last of the good works prescribed.

2d. *The Intention to Gain the Indulgence.*—One who should do all the good works prescribed for the gaining of an indulgence, but who did not have the intention of gaining an indulgence, would not gain it. At least a virtual if not an expressed intention is needed;

and as, according to the common opinion, a virtual intention lasts hardly longer than one day, it is good every morning to make the resolution of gaining all the indulgences attached to the practices of piety which one may perform during the day.

3d. *The Good Works Prescribed.* — One must fulfill these works and perform them in the manner prescribed; such as kneeling, standing, at a particular hour, on a certain day, after confession, after communion, praying for particular intentions, etc. For example, there are indulgences attached to the saying of the *Angelus*, provided that one recites it kneeling when one can conveniently do so; hence, one must recite it kneeling, if he desires to gain the indulgences; plenary indulgences are attached to the *Way of the Cross*, on condition that it is made entirely, and that at each picture one changes his place; all these conditions must be fulfilled before the indulgence can be gained.

When confession is prescribed as the essential work, it is indispensable even for those who are guilty of only venial sins. Nevertheless, those who have this pious habit of going to confession every week, or even every two weeks, can, in several dioceses, by a special privilege, gain all the indulgences, even the plenary indulgences, which are granted within the interval of their confessions, if they are well disposed. When one has no grievous sin to confess, it is not necessary to receive absolution in order to gain an indulgence; it is sufficient simply to go to confession. For those persons who do not go to confession weekly, it is sufficient if they go to confession within the week that precedes the feast, provided that they make their confession with the intention of gaining the indulgence, and that they keep themselves in the state of grace.

As to communion, which is generally required to gain an indulgence, the indulgence may also be gained by receiving communion on the day before the feast to which the indulgence is attached.

A work already obligatory under some other title cannot serve to gain an indulgence. However, during the time of jubilee, the fast of Lent may satisfy a double obligation.

If prayers are prescribed, it is not sufficent to say them mentally; they must be said vocally, that is, by word of mouth. If the sovereign pontiff prescribes prayers for the need of the church, without determining what prayers, it is sufficient to recite five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys*, according to the intention of the holy father.

IX. Need I exhort you, my brethren, to profit by a means at once so efficacious and so easy of acquitting or diminishing the debts owing to God's justice, either by ourselves or by others! In the next instruction I shall speak to you of purgatory and of the torments suffered there for the expiation of the temporal punishment due to sin. There you shall see how blind we would be, and how uncharitably we would act, if we were not to make every effort, while we are in this world, to avoid or to abridge for ourselves these frightful torments, or to deliver those poor souls who are already condemned to the flames of purgatory. Therefore, let us gain all the indulgences we can, and let us hasten to put ourselves in the necessary dispositions, if we are not already in the state of grace and imbued with the spirit of penance which God requires. Amen.

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## XXI. INSTRUCTION

### On Purgatory

Is there a purgatory? What are the torments one suffers therein? What are our duties towards the souls in purgatory? Behold the subject of our instruction to-day!

I. And, first, is there a purgatory, that is, a place of expiation where the souls of those who die in the grace of God, but who have not yet entirely satisfied for their sins, must suffer for a time in order to satisfy the divine justice, before being admitted to the reward of the elect? Yes, my brethren, there is a purgatory. The general belief of all nations argues this; and the oracles of Holy Scripture, and the tradition, as well as the formal definitions, of the Church, do not permit us to have the least doubt upon this matter.

1st. If we consult the history of the most ancient nations, we find that everywhere and at all times, there were sacrifices for the dead; libations and expiatory rites, to purify them from their stains and to restore to them their primitive innocence. Whence arose a belief so ancient and so general? It must have been derived only from a

primitive revelation, that is, from the source of all truth, from God Himself.

2d. Holy Scripture expresses itself in the most formal manner on purgatory. In the Old Testament, Judas the Machabee, after a celebrated victory, exhorted the Jews to pray for those of his warriors who had fallen in battle; for, adds the sacred text, *it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, in order that they may be loosed from sins* (II. Mach. XII. 42–45). Nothing can be clearer than these words, and the apostle St. John, in the Apocalypse (XXI. 27), says: *Nothing defiled shall enter the kingdom of heaven.* How many there are who die before being able to expiate all their sins and before obtaining pardon of certain venial sins? Where, then, shall these souls go, on leaving this world, since they cannot yet enter the kingdom of heaven? They cannot be condemned to hell, because they are in the state of grace. Therefore, there must be between heaven and hell a middle place, where venial sins can be expiated; and that place is purgatory.

3d. What places this truth beyond all dispute is the constant tradition and the formal teaching of the Church. St. Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, tells us of a fervent Christian, called Sammachus, who watered the grave of his wife less with his tears than with his prayers and alms. St. Augustine recalls to mind with great emotion the last words of his mother Monica, who, when dying, recommended herself to the prayers of her son. In the second century, Tertullian speaks of the custom which Christians had of praying for the dead. All the other Fathers and Doctors of the Church, such as St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Athanasius, Thodoret, St. Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory, place the dogma of purgatory among the articles of faith. To prove that such has always been the belief and teaching of the Church, we could quote here an endless number of witnesses; but suffice it to say that the holy Council of Trent has formally anathemized any one who denies the doctrine of purgatory, and decided that if the sinner does not satisfy in this world for the temporal punishment due to his sins, he has to satisfy for it in purgatory after death (Sess. VI., c. 30.)

It is, therefore, an article of faith that there is a purgatory; we cannot question the existence of purgatory any more than the existence of heaven or of hell. And any one who should refuse to believe

in it, would no longer be a child of the Church; he would not be a Catholic any more, and would be out of the way of salvation.

II. What is purgatory, and what are the torments suffered there? In purgatory souls have to suffer two kinds of torments; the privation of God and the pain of fire.

1st. *The Privation of God.*—This is an article of faith, defined by the General Council of Florence. This privation of the enjoyment of God is for them the most fearful of all torments; for they know that they are made for God, and destined to see and possess Him forever in heaven. And as they love Him with all the affection of which they are capable, they sigh for the moment to be admitted to His presence. They are like captives in a distant land, sighing for their beloved country; or like dutiful children separated from the most loving of parents. Oh! who can picture the lonesomeness which devours these holy souls, and their holy impatience to leave their loathsome prison and go into the delights of heaven! To know that one has merited heaven, that one is inscribed among the number of the elect, and, nevertheless, to be unable to partake of the glory and happiness of heaven, is, indeed, a fearful torment.

2d. *The Pain of Fire.*—According to the opinion of most theologians, the fire of purgatory is a real fire, and all the more fierce since it is enkindled by the wrath of God. In comparison with the fire of purgatory, the fire of earth is nothing. According to St. Augustine, the fire of purgatory is like the fire of hell, and differs from it only in duration.

Such are the torments of the souls in purgatory; torments which we seem to dread so little, and to which we expose ourselves so easily. How long will the sufferings of purgatory last? We do not know, for God has not deigned to reveal this to us. Perhaps months or only days; perhaps years and centuries. One day it was revealed to St. Bridget that there are souls in purgatory condemned to suffer until the day of judgment. St. Vincent Ferrier says that it was revealed to him that persons had been condemned to purgatory an entire year for one single venial act.

However it may be with these particular revelations which, although respectable in themselves, are for all that not articles of faith, it is always certain that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* We cannot leave purgatory until we have paid the last farthing. Remember that we deserve the pains of purgatory

every time we commit a venial sin, and that the more venial sins and remains of sins remaining with us at death the longer will be our suffering in purgatory.

Let us learn from this, my brethren, how important it is to watch over ourselves, and to avoid those apparently slight faults, which will condemn us to those avenging flames. Let us learn how essential it is to satisfy for our sins by prayer and penance in this life, and thus escape the torments of purgatory.

III. What are our duties towards these unfortunate souls who are confined in this place of expiation and of sufferings, and how can we relieve them?

It is an article of faith that by our prayers and good works we can procure the relief, and even the entire deliverance, of the souls in purgatory. We make profession of this belief when we recite the Apostles' Creed and say: *I believe in the Communion of Saints;* for these words signify the union and charity which exist between the Church militant, the Church suffering, and the Church triumphant. Just as the saints in heaven can assist us by their prayers, so, also, can we assist the souls in purgatory, in relieving their suffering and shortening their term of imprisonment.

We are obliged to do this, my brethren, according to the measure of our strength. The glory of God, charity towards these poor souls, and our own interest impel us to this pious duty.

1st. *The Glory of God.*— Theologians teach us that it would be very difficult to honor Him in a more efficacious manner than by freeing souls from purgatory, and that everything one does for these souls is even more meritorious than the labors of missionaries who cross the seas and go into distant lands to convert the infidels. Do you know what a pious Christian does who labors for the deliverance of the poor souls? He imitates our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, when He descended into Limbo, to comfort the holy souls who were detained there.

A pious author, Father Rupert, says: "God finds himself in a strange state in regard to the holy souls in purgatory: He loves them with a tender and paternal love, because they are holy; and, nevertheless, He is obliged to punish them. His goodness would like to pardon them, but His justice is opposed to this. How it must grieve His heart to chastise these chaste and holy souls! Think what it would cost a tender father to put into prison and to deprive of nourishment

a son whom he idolizes, but whom he is obliged to punish on account of some fault he has committed. What a pleasure, therefore, does he procure to God who intercedes for these blessed souls, who satisfies for their sins and thus saves them from their fearful sufferings!"

2d. A second motive which obliges us not less to labor for the relief of the souls in purgatory, is *charity*. Suppose that a fire breaks out in the neighborhood, and that a whole family is in danger of perishing in the flames, who among you would not hasten to their rescue? He would, indeed, be cowardly and hard-hearted, who should remain indifferent in so great a danger. The situation of the souls in purgatory is similar. They suffer unspeakable torments. And, fettered as they are, by the hand of the almighty power of God, they can do nothing for their own deliverance. But you can help them, my brethren; it depends on you to deliver them. If you have any charity, will you hesitate for a moment to assist them; and with the faith that you have, would you not be most cruel to abandon your suffering brethren?

And how many of these suffering souls may be united to you by the ties of relationship or friendship! Do you not hear the voice of that father, or of that beloved mother whose loss you still bewail, or of that brother, of that sister whom you loved so dearly; wife, do you not hear the voice of your husband; parents, do you not hear the wail of your children; and do we not all hear the cry of some friend or of some benefactor who begs our assistance? *Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me* (Job xix. 21). Ah! even if we were strangers to you, even then you ought to have compassion on us; but you, parents, friends, how can you forget us, suffering as we are? My son, my daughter, cries out a father, or an unfortunate mother, I suffered so much for you on earth, I took so much care of you, I left to you all my goods, and now you even refuse to assist me with a few prayers! My husband, my wife, my brother, my friend, where is that love which united us once, where is the gratitude you owe me? *Have pity on me.* . . .

But among so many voices which claim your assistance in the name of charity, what voice is that which appeals to the rights of justice? Ah! it is addressed to you, my dear hearer, to you who have inherited goods under condition that you should have masses said, that you should give alms to the poor, that you should pay a sum to the Church; and you have done nothing of all this, or very little! Ah! cries out the suffering soul, how ungrateful and unjust you are! I

have robbed myself of everything for your sake, I have left you all my worldly goods, I have made you what you are, and now you have forgotten me, and you refuse me all assistance in this frightful state in which I find myself. Ah! how cruel you are! If you do not desire to help me in the name of friendship and gratitude, help me, at least, in the name of justice. Pay your debts; I claim it in the name of God and of His eternal vengeance. *Have pity on me.* . . .

3d. To the motives I have named there remains a third one, which is your *own interest.* Be sure that everything you do for the souls in purgatory will be repaid a hundredfold, and that when they shall reach heaven some day, they will pray for you. If you should be fortunate enough to deliver one single soul from purgatory, your salvation would be almost assured, because, then, you would have in heaven a friend who would never cease to pray for you, and who could not fail to obtain for you the grace of conversion and perseverance. On the contrary, if you do not pray, and if you are like those Christians who are given up to a contemptible avarice, and who never sacrifice a penny either for masses or for alms, you must expect to be treated in the same manner by those who come after you.

IV. By what means can we relieve these suffering souls? The first and principal means is the holy sacrifice of the Mass; because the blood of Jesus Christ which flows upon the altar is like a refreshing water which helps to extinguish, or, at least, to diminish, the flames of purgatory. Alms-giving has, also, always been considered as an excellent means to alleviate the sufferings of the poor souls and to hasten the moment of their entering into the place of refeshment, light, and peace. Indulgences can so easily and so often be applied to them. Finally, prayer, holy communion, mortification, and, in general, all good works, provided they are performed in the state of grace and for their intention.

Pray, therefore, for these unfortunate souls, and employ all possible means to relieve them. From time to time cause the sacrifice of the Mass to be offered up for them; often assist at Mass and give alms to the poor for their intention. Teach your children to have the same sentiments of charity towards the dead, in order that one day they may pray for you. If you have duties of justice towards the deceased, do not fail to acquit yourselves of them as soon as possible, and do not give the sad example of hard-heartedness and of ingratitude to the dead.

But, in laboring thus for others, do not forget yourselves; and since there is so little needed to cause your condemnation to the frightful pains of purgatory, redouble your watchfulness, avoid even the smallest faults, and redouble your zeal to expiate those which you have committed. What a consolation for you at the hour of death, if your debts are entirely paid, if your sins are totally effaced, and if you are allowed to enter immediately into the possession of eternal glory! May God give you this grace! Amen.

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## XXII. INSTRUCTION

### On Extreme Unction

Extreme unction is a sacrament instituted by our Saviour Jesus Christ, for both the spiritual and corporal relief of the sick.

That it is a real sacrament of the New Law is an article of faith, which has always been believed and taught in the Church, and which has been formally defined by the holy Council of Trent, in the following terms: *If any one dares to maintain that extreme unction is not really a sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, but only a ceremony recommended by the fathers, or a pure human invention, let him be anathema* (Sess. xiv., c. 13).

Besides, it is easy to see that extreme unction unites the three characters which constitute a sacrament. We find the outward sign in the unctions which the priest makes on the person of the sick with holy oils and in the prayers which accompany them. This outward sign has the power to produce grace, because it purifies us from our sins. And, finally, this sign has been established by Jesus Christ, because God alone is the author and principle of grace.

The matter of this sacrament is *the oil of the sick*, consecrated by the bishop, and the form is the words which the priest pronounces in applying the holy oil on the principal organs or senses of the sick person, on the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the hands, and the feet, with the view to obtain pardon from God for the sins which the sick may have committed by each of these exterior members.

The sacrament of extreme unction is called thus, because it is the last of the unctions which the Church makes on us. We receive the first in baptism, the second in confirmation, and extreme unction is the third and last. By the first we become children of God; by the second soldiers of Jesus Christ; and the third prepares us for the terrible assaults of the devil, at the hour of death.

All that faith teaches us about extreme unction is contained in substance in the Epistle of St. James, chap. v., where it is said: *Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

I. The effects which the sacrament of extreme unction produces can be reduced to three: the remission of sins; the relief and strength of the soul; the restoration of health, if God so pleases.

1st. *The Remission of Sins.* — Although this sacrament has not been instituted for this end, nevertheless it has the power to purify us, not only from all venial sins which may be remitted outside the sacrament of penance, but, also, from the mortal sins which might not have been effaced by confession.

Thus, it may happen that a person, after having received absolution and communion, has fallen into mortal sin of which he may not know anything or which he has forgotten, and which, consequently, he will not confess; or he has received absolution and communion in an unworthy manner, without knowing it. In this case, if he receives extreme unction with a real contrition, he obtains the remission of his faults, however grievous they may be. This follows from the words of St. James, quoted before: "If he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." And not only does he obtain the remission of sins, but also of the remains of sin, which are the temporal punishment, and the spiritual weakness and languor, such as the blindness of mind, hardness of the heart, and a strong inclination to evil. Extreme unction has the power to remit wholly or in part the temporal punishments which we owe to divine justice after our sins have been pardoned, according to the fervor with which we receive it. It is a remedy sovereignly efficacious against the infirmities which sin ordinarily leaves in our soul: "*And if he be in sin.*" . . . Such is the teaching of the Church.

2d. A second effect, says the Council of Trent, after the apostle St. James, is to procure for *our soul relief* in its pains and strength against

the horrors of death and the temptations of the devil. If we need confidence in the trials, resignation in the adversities, and strength against the evil suggestions of every day, how much more so in these last moments when we are oppressed by so many evils, when death presents itself to us with all that is frightful, and when the infernal spirit redoubles his rage and fury in order to drag us into hell.

Extreme unction has the virtue of calming all this anguish of soul, just as oil and balsam alleviate suffering of the body. Extreme unction raises our confidence in God, and inclines us to absolute and perfect resignation; it dispels the idle phantoms which the approach of our last hour raises in our troubled mind, and it assists us to conquer the enemy of salvation.

How else, my brethren, can you account for that calm, that serenity, that peace of mind, which we notice so often in the sick who have just received the sacrament of extreme unction? Ah! undoubtedly, absolution and Holy Communion have contributed very much towards this; but it is mainly due to the unction of the dying which has been instituted for this very end.

3d. The third and last effect which the Council attributes to extreme unction,— always according to the apostle St. James,— is the restoration of corporal health, if it should contribute to the salvation of the sick person.

Restoration to health is not the ordinary effect of extreme unction; but it can, and often does, restore health, if God judges it proper. It was by this precious remedy that the apostles healed many sick: *And they anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them* (Mark VI. 13). These unctions were the prelude of the sacrament which the divine Saviour was to institute. It happens so often that extreme unction is followed by extraordinary and unexpected cures that we have a perfect right to believe that this grace is not at all foreign to this sacrament. But this effect depends entirely on the wisdom and goodness of God, and when one receives this sacrament he ought to seek before all the good of his soul and the help which it needs for salvation.

II. Such are the wonderful effects of extreme unction. After all that you have just heard, I need not tell you how important it is for a sick person to receive this sacrament. Those who attend the sick person should hasten with a pious alacrity to have the sacrament administered as soon as the danger of death shows itself. Extreme unction is

not, indeed, a necessary sacrament, like baptism; and a sick person can be saved even without receiving this help. But it is necessary "by the necessity of precept"; and a sick person who, with full knowledge, would refuse to receive it, or the relatives and servants of the sick who would neglect to call a priest in order to administer it, would be in danger of committing a mortal sin.

It is related of a holy bishop, named Malachias, that, having neglected to give extreme unction to a woman who died without receiving it, he was so overcome with sorrow, that he passed the whole night in prayer, and sighs, and tears. Therefore, my brethren, when your end draws near, or if you are attending a sick person who appears to be near death, hasten to call the minister of the Church in order that he may bring the last consolations of religion. Far from being a pledge of death, as many wrongly imagine, this sacrament may even restore his health, and, in all cases, it will be for the sick a source of graces and consolations, which will render his last moments less gloomy, and will assist him to die a good and holy death.

III. When may one receive extreme unction? May one receive it before the danger of death manifests itself, or must one wait until the last moment? Neither one nor the other. There must be some danger. *Is any man sick among you?* But as soon as the danger is certain, one should hasten to receive it. To wait until the last moment, would be exposing oneself never to receive it, or to receive it without knowledge, and, perhaps, without fruit.

And, nevertheless, this happens too frequently. Under pretext of not aggravating the condition of the sick person, or of not frightening the family, extreme unction is put off from day to day. And, as is often the consequence, the sick person has gone to appear before the tribunal of God without this sacrament. Undoubtedly, nobody can be held responsible for the surprises of death; but what we can do and ought to do, is not to expose ourselves to the danger of being surprised, and, consequently, to take measures in time.

This leads me to a practical question, about which I would like to say a few words. What must we believe of those sick persons who have lost the use of reason before going to confession? Must the sacrament of extreme unction be given to them? Yes, when one can reasonably suppose that they were in good dispositions before they lost the use of reason. Such is the practice of the Church. There is a more powerful motive to give extreme unction to those children who

have not yet made their first communion, but who have sufficient knowledge to distinguish good from evil, because, having the use of reason, they may have committed sin, and may be in need of these helps to die a good death. But as to those who *never* had the use of reason, be they adults or not, extreme unction must not be given to them.

IV. How often can we receive the sacrament of extreme unction? We can receive it only once in the same sickness, however long the sickness may last; but if after having recovered from one illness, one becomes sick again, he can receive this sacrament anew, and receive it as many times as there is a relapse. When in doubt whether the illness is always the same, the priests adopt the surest part, and again administer the sacrament.

Every priest, in virtue of his ordination, can validly administer extreme unction: *Let him bring in the priests.* But, conformably to the discipline of the Church, only the pastor or his delegate can administer it legitimately, except in cases of necessity. It is becoming that the relatives of the sick person gather around his bed, during the administration of this sacrament, in order to unite their prayers with those of the priest. It is always becoming that the sick person, after the reception of extreme unction, if he be a parent, call around him his children and, according to the example of Tobias, give to them his blessing, accompanied with some salutary advice; for children do not easily forget the last words of a father or a mother.

V. It remains to speak of the manner of administering this sacrament, and of the dispositions necessary to receive it.

When the time has come, the parents or servants of the sick person prepare the sick room, and put it in the best state of cleanliness. Near the bed of the sick person is placed a table covered with a white cloth. On the table is placed a crucifix and two lighted candles, holy water in a vessel, with sprinkler; a plate containing six or seven balls of cotton, and a few slices of bread to wipe off the fingers of the priest. Finally, there is needed a small pitcher filled with water, a clean towel, and a plate or basin to receive the water and the crumbs when the priest washes his hands.

The priest puts the holy oil on the table; and, vested with surplice and violet stole, he takes a crucifix and offers it to the sick person to be kissed. He sprinkles the sick bed and the assistants with holy water and recommends the attendants to pray while he administers

the sacrament. He anoints the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, and feet of the sick person. If there is no time to make all these unctions before the sick person expires, one unction would be sufficient.

After having washed his hands, the priest returns to the sick person, reciting prayers beseeching the God of goodness and mercy to grant to His servant all that is necessary, either for soul or body. He then addresses a few words to the sick person to sustain his courage, to prepare him for the terrible passage from time to eternity, and ends by giving him his blessing.

You see, my brethren, how everything is grave and edifying in extreme unction. You must have often admired the inestimable effects which it produces in the sick. Should we be astonished that the saints had always so much respect for this sacrament, and the greatest personages, such as St. Louis, king of France, and Henry III., king of England, wished to receive it lying upon ashes and sackcloth?

VI. But, in order that extreme unction may produce its wonderful effects, it must be received with the right dispositions.

The first and most necessary disposition is *the state of grace.* For, although extreme unction has the power of remitting sins, it is a sacrament of the living, and he would commit a sacrilege who would knowingly receive it in the state of mortal sin. Hence, if one would feel oneself guilty of some grievous fault, one would have to purify oneself by a good confession, accompanied with absolution.

The second disposition is *perfect confidence in God.* It is not seldom that at this last moment the devil seeks to frighten the soul and bring it to despair. But, however enormous and numerous your sins may be, be careful never to be discouraged. Has not the blood of Jesus Christ an infinite value? Is not His mercy without limit? Was not the penitent thief pardoned on the cross? Return sincerely to God and have full confidence in Him.

The third and last disposition is *an entire resignation to God's will.* We must die some day, whether we want to or not. Let us submit to divine Providence, and let us generously accept the chalice which is offered to us. According to the example of our divine master, let us freely bring the sacrifice of all that is most dear to us in this world. In sickness, we can do nothing more meritorious, nothing better fitted to open heaven for us, than to offer up our life. And, moreover, what can keep us so much attached to this miserable earth, where, perhaps, we should only increase the number of our sins, and expose ourselves

to die in impenitence? Is heaven not preferable to all the joys and pleasures of this world, where all pleasures are mingled with so much bitterness? Let us cry out in this supreme moment: Ah! when shall my pilgrimage end in this land of exile? or, borrowing the words of the royal prophet: *When shall I appear before the face of God?* (Ps. XLI. 3.)

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## XXIII. INSTRUCTION

### On the Sacrament of Holy Orders

I. Holy Orders is a sacrament which gives power and grace to exercise the functions of the Church. Although, generally speaking, few of you are called to receive this sacrament, it is, nevertheless, necessary for you to be instructed in it.

It is an article of faith that Holy Orders is one of the seven sacraments; for the Church has always believed this, and has solemnly defined it in several councils, especially in the Council of Trent, which expresses itself in the following terms: "If anybody says that Orders or *Holy Ordination* is not really and properly a sacrament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." Our divine Saviour instituted this sacrament on Holy Thursday, on the eve of His passion, when He gave to His apostles and to all the priests, their successors, the power to consecrate His adorable body and blood, by saying to them, after the institution of the Eucharist: *Do this in commemoration of me* (Luke XXII. 19). For, in thus giving to them the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, He instituted them priests of the New Covenant, and it was evidently His wish that they should transmit this power to others, in succession from generation to generation, until the end of the world.

II. The sacrament of Holy Orders produces two principal effects in those who receive it. The first is grace — not that which we call *first grace* or grace of justification, which from sinners renders us just, because Holy Order is a sacrament of the living, and, consequently, one must have grace before receiving it; but it gives that *second grace* which renders the just still more holy and confers upon them the means to fulfill worthily the duties of their state of life.

The second effect of this sacrament is the imprint on the soul of an indelible character or mark, which not only distinguishes the priest from laymen, but gives to him, also, the power to exercise the holy functions of the Church. Whence it follows that no layman, however learned and holy he may be, may perform the work of the sacred ministry, without a sacrilegious usurpation.

The *matter* of this sacrament consists in the imposition of hands, made by the bishops, on the heads of those who are ordained, and the *form* of the sacrament consists of the words which accompany the imposition of hands, and the presentation of the sacred vessels.

III. It is, therefore, the sacrament of Holy Orders which consecrates priests and gives ministers to the Church. Without this sacrament, no one may exercise the functions of the holy ministry, no one may fulfill the functions as pastor, or celebrate the sacred mysteries, or hear confessions, or preach the word of God, or bless your marriage. Therefore, without Holy Orders, there would be neither worship nor religion.

But let us enter deeper into this matter, and let us examine more in detail what the sacrament of Holy Orders consists of, and what are the various degrees through which one has to pass in order to become a priest of God.

IV. In the first place, there is what we call *tonsure*. This is only a preparatory ceremony before Holy Orders. Nevertheless, those who have received it bear the name of clerics and form a part of the sacred militia. The bishop when giving tonsure cuts off a portion of the hair of those that receive it, in order to point out their renunciation of the joys and vanities of the world, and their consecration to the service of God and to the ministry of the holy altar.

Then come the four *minor orders* of acolyte, exorcist, reader, and porter. They are called minor orders, not because they are not very honorable in themselves, for everything is great, everything is noble, in the Church, but because they are subordinate to the major orders which follow.

The first of the minor orders, after the tonsure, is that of *porter* or doorkeeper. The functions of those who have received it are to open and to close the doors of the Church, to ring the bells for the beginning of divine service, to watch over the cleanliness of the house of the Lord, and to prevent it from being profaned.

The second minor order is that of *exorcist*, which contains the power to expel the devil from the body of the possessed. The functions of those who have received it are to prepare the water and other things the Church employs in the blessings and exorcisms. As demoniacal possession is much rarer now than formerly, it is the custom of the present day for exorcism to be made by the bishops, or priests commissioned by them, and, as a rule, it is forbidden not only to those that are not priests, but even to priests themselves, to perform exorcisms, on account of the great prudence which this sacred office requires. Parish priests are only authorized to exorcise insects which devour the harvests.

The third minor order is that of *reader*. His functions are to read or to sing the lessons which are said in the offices of the Church, except the epistle of the Mass, and to teach Christian doctrine to the children.

The fourth and last of the minor orders is that of *acolyte*. He is charged to light and extinguish the candles used in divine service, to carry them during Mass and other offices, to prepare the water and wine for the holy sacrifice, and to serve solemnly at Mass.

During several centuries only ecclesiastics consecrated for this purpose could exercise the functions of the four minor orders, and it is only because there is not a sufficient number of candidates that the Church to-day permits laymen to fulfill them. When, therefore, the latter are employed for some of these sacred functions, they ought to perform them with a spirit of religion and humility, esteeming themselves happy to contribute thus towards the glory of God and towards the majesty of His worship.

After the candidates have passed some time in the minor orders, the Church raises them by degrees to the major or sacred orders, which are the subdeaconship, the deaconship, and the priesthood. The order of priest comprises both the priesthood and the episcopacy.

The *subdeacon* vows perpetual chastity, and binds himself to recite the divine office and to wear the ecclesiastical habit. These promises are irrevocable, and he is no longer permitted to return to the world. His functions are to serve the deacon at the altar and to sing the epistle. He receives, in this order, the power to touch the sacred linen and vessels.

The functions of the *deacon* are to attend and assist the priest at Mass, to read the Gospel, and, with the permission of the bishop,

to preach publicly and to administer solemnly the sacrament of baptism.

The last of the sacred orders is that of the *priesthood*.

The functions of the priest are to offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass, to administer the sacraments, except those of confirmation and Holy Orders, to preach the word of God, and to perform the most of the blessings used in the Church.

The bishop ordains priests, administers confirmation to the faithful, appoints the parish priests, decides controversies of faith, consecrates other bishops, and, finally, rules his whole diocese, under the direction of the bishop of bishops, the supreme head of the Church, who is our holy father the Pope. The episcopate is the complement of Holy Orders, the highest degree of the priesthood, that which contains the whole dignity and plenitude of the priesthood. All the inferior orders, like so many steps in mounting to the altar of God, form but one and the same sacrament of holy orders.

V. Let us consider the excellence of this sacrament, and the effect which it produces in those who receive it. To mortal eyes, the priest is, indeed, only a man like the rest of men, subject to the same miseries and to the same infirmities. But to the eyes of faith, this dignity is the most holy, the most noble, and the most august upon earth. He is the representative of Jesus Christ, the depository of His oracles, the dispenser of His sacred mysteries. What an astonishing power has he not received! The priest ascends the altar, and Jesus Christ obeys his call, comes down from heaven, and comes to incarnate Himself, as St. Augustine remarks, in the hands of the priest, as He once did in the bosom of His blessed Mother. The priest sits in the sacred tribunal of penance, and by one word he restores innocence to the guilty, reconciles him with his God, and reopens to him the gates of heaven. He mounts the pulpit and announces to the people the truths of the Gospel, the word of God Himself; he enlightens the mind and touches the heart; he teaches the principles of faith and the duties of a Christian life and exhorts us to practice them, he continues the wholesome and glorious ministry of Jesus Christ Himself. What our divine Saviour did during His mortal life the priest now does in His name; hence, the saying of one of the Fathers of the Church that the priest is another Christ: *Sacerdos alter Christus*.

The Fathers of the Church could not find terms worthy enough to point out the eminent dignity of the priesthood. The dignity of a

priest is immense, infinite; it surpasses immeasurably the majesty and glory of all the dignities of this world. What is the dignity of the kings and princes of this world? Hardly a shadow when compared with the dignity of the priesthood. What is the dignity of the angels themselves, who stand before the throne of God and minister to His will? It is far below that of a priest. To priests and not to angels has been given the power to absolve from sins, to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

VI. What are the duties which you owe to the priests? 1st. You owe them *respect*. Their eminent dignity explains this duty sufficiently. They hold the place of Jesus Christ here upon earth, and whatever you should do against the least among them you would do against Jesus Christ Himself. To despise them would be to despise Jesus Christ. *Touch not my anointed*, says the Holy Ghost (I Par. XVI. 22). Be on your guard not to blame or to despise them, or turn them into ridicule. And if a priest should happen to fail in his duties, — which God forbid! — throw a mantle of charity over his conduct; be content with sighing in your heart, and praying for his conversion.

2d. You owe to the priest *obedience* in everything that regards your salvation. It is only under this condition that a pastor can assume the administration of a parish. If he forbids certain reunions or profane amusements, which might cause disorder, you must submit yourselves. See in his person the person of Christ Himself whom he represents among you, and obey him as you would obey our Saviour Himself.

3d. Finally, you owe *confidence* to your priests; and, more yet, you owe them affection and thankfulness. What services does not a priest render to the faithful intrusted to his care? Hardly are you born when he is there to lead you to the threshold of life, to open to you the gates of the Church, and to make you children of God. As soon as your reason commences to develop, he is there to instruct, to direct you in the good way, to prepare you for the great acts of first communions and confirmation. Later, when you think about your vocation, it is the priest again who will prepare you for this and bless your marriage. When misfortune befalls you, when you are afflicted or in need, it is the priest who most often comes to assist you and to console you; when you are sick, he will visit and encourage you; and when death draws near, he will not leave your bedside without having given you

all the helps of religion, without having done all in his power to put you in a state worthy to appear before the Supreme Judge. Finally, after your death, he will pray for your eternal rest.

In fact, my brethren, is there anybody in this world to whom you owe more than to the priest? How, then, can we explain that hatred, and even furious wrath, which certain people nourish against him? How can we explain all those bitter criticisms and all those atrocious calumnies with which one so often seeks to blacken his character? I do not speak of you here present, my dear brethren, for I know how this congregation has always loved and respected its priests. But I speak in general, and I say that it is something very sad and deplorable to see the little respect, confidence, and affection which some exhibit to-day for the representatives of Jesus Christ. Do not imitate them, but continue to esteem your priests, and keep away from those blind and prejudiced persons. In your reunions, in your families, never censure the priest, whosoever he may be, and, if you can, hinder others from doing so. In honoring the priest, you will honor your religion, you will honor Jesus Christ Himself, who will bless you and reward you.

There remains for me another question to treat briefly. Who are those who may aspire to be raised to the dignity of the priesthood? Ask this of Jesus Christ Himself; for only those whom God calls may aspire to this honor. If there is a particular vocation for every state of life, how much more for so holy and sublime a calling! Vocation is necessary; but there are also certain qualities of mind and heart which the Church requires in her candidates. Therefore, how rashly and senselessly do those parents talk, who say: "I want this child to become a priest." . . . *You* desire, indeed; but does *God* desire it. Has the child an inclination for this holy state? Has he piety, has he the necessary talents? If not, then beware of forcing him into the ecclesiastical state. You would make a bad priest of him. And may God preserve every parish from a bad priest, as from the greatest evil! But if your child seems to have all the necessary qualities, and, especially, a great inclination for the ecclesiastical state, then, if you can do so, furnish him the means for following this holy career. Impose upon yourselves, if necessary, some privations and sacrifices. It is the best service which you can render your boy, not for his temporal advantages, indeed, for we live in a time and a country where the holy ministry is an ungrateful and difficult state, but for the good of his soul.

And, especially, will you render a great service to the Church, your good mother, that is never more happy than when she can recruit good and holy priests; and at the same time you procure for yourselves before God a powerful intercessor who will not fail to obtain for you a great abundance of graces, both for you and your family.

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## XXIV. INSTRUCTION

### On Matrimony

I. Marriage has been instituted since the beginning of the world. It was God Himself who instituted it when He gave Eve to Adam for a companion: *It is not good*, said the Lord, *for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself* (Gen. II. 18). Adam in receiving Eve, said: *This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; wherefor man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife* (Gen. II. 23–24). And God blessed them and said: *Increase and multiply and fill the earth* (Gen. I. 28).

In these words of Holy Scripture we see not only the institution of marriage but also the two principal reasons for which it has been established. The first is to establish a bond of mutual help between the man and the woman; and the second, to procure for God, in the propagation of mankind, a multitude of worshipers who, after having honored and served him upon earth, will glorify Him eternally in heaven.

In these we see, also, the nature and essence of marriage, that is, the union of man with only one woman and not with several, *and they shall be two in one flesh.* . . . It is the most intimate union which nature can form, because it should be precisely that which exists between the father and the child; and, finally, the most indissoluble union, because, as Jesus Christ teaches, it can be broken only by death: *What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder* (Matt. XIX. 3). Before Jesus Christ marriage was already indissoluble, and God permitted divorce to the Jews only on account

of their hard-heartedness. Our Saviour restored marriage to its primitive purity and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. The Church, faithful depository and interpreter of the teachings of the divine Master, has always proclaimed the indissolubility of marriage and condemned divorce; she has always declared that the conjugal tie can be broken only by death.

II. Before the preaching of the Gospel, marriage was only a civil contract by which a man united himself inseparably to a woman, conformably to the laws of the country. This contract, although it was ordinarily made in the temples, or at least in the presence of priests, and with all the solemnity of the religious ceremonies, had no power to produce grace. It had no other effect than to guarantee the society of the spouses against the inconstancy and caprices of the human passions, to legitimize the children, and to assure peace and union in the family.

But our Saviour Jesus Christ, knowing all the duties, troubles, and dangers of married life, and wishing to enrich it with quite particular blessings, and to make it a permanent source of grace, raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. According to the common opinion of theologians, He did this when He assisted at the nuptials of Cana, where He blessed and not only sanctified the marriage contracted there, but also marriage in general. Marriage, since the beginning of Christianity, has always been acknowledged as a sacrament of the Church, and the holy Council of Trent decrees anathema against any one who dares to maintain that this sacrament has not been instituted by Jesus Christ, and that it does not confer grace.

Therefore, if you ask what marriage is, under the New Law, I answer that it is a sacrament which sanctifies the legitimate union between a man and a woman, and gives them the necessary graces to fulfill the duties of their state. The visible sign, which is also the matter, is the joining of hands and the mutual consent of the spouses expressed in words; and the form is the blessing of the priest and the consent of the contracting parties. The minister of the sacrament is the priest, according to some; according to others, the contracting parties themselves.

But remark that when we say that the sacrament of marriage sanctifies the union of man and woman, we add the *legitimate* union, to give you to understand that, in order that this sacrament may bring down grace on the married parties, it must be contracted according to

the laws of the Church. In this important and grave matter God has placed the power of the Church as a check on the caprices and passions of man, to stop all disorder and to hinder certain unions which would be contrary to good morals and detrimental to society. Hence the impediments of marriage. These are of two kinds: the first kind is *invalidating*, and renders the marriage null and void; the second is *prohibitory*, and renders the marriage only unlawful, but not null and void.

III. Among the first, which are fifteen in number, I shall mention particularly: 1st. *Religious Profession and the Reception of Holy Orders.*—If one is consecrated to God by the religious life, by a solemn vow of chastity, or for the service of the altar, one can no longer contract marriage; 2d. *Natural Relationship* which does not permit marriage among kindred down to the fourth degree inclusive; 3d. *Spiritual Relationship* which is contracted in baptism, and which forbids a godfather to marry his goddaughter, or her mother; and a godmother to marry her godson, or his father; 4th. *Alliance or Affinity*, which is contracted between the husband and the parents of his wife; and between the wife and the parents of her husband, and which extends to the fourth degree when the intercourse has been legitimate, and to the second degree, when it has been criminal; 5th. *Clandestinity*, which renders null and void every marriage that is not contracted in presence of the parish priest, or of any other priest commissioned by him or by the bishop, and of two witnesses, at least, in all countries where the decrees of the Council of Trent have been published. In the United States there are only a few dioceses where these decrees have been published; consequently, marriage would be valid here even if it were not contracted before a priest.

It is in order to discover these impediments and others which it would take too long to enumerate, that the Church has established the banns or publications of marriage, which ought to be made for *three* consecutive Sundays in the parish Church of each of the persons to be married. Without a proper dispensation, none of these publications can be omitted. A person who may know of any impediments is obliged, in conscience, to inform the parish priest. And those who have had the misfortune to marry with any invalidating impediment ought to hasten to rehabilitate their marriage in the eyes of the Church.

Besides these invalidating impediments, there are others, we have said, which we call *prohibitory*, and which, without rendering marriage null and void, would render it nevertheless unlawful. Such are: 1st. *The Prohibition of the Church*, which comprises the omission of publication of the banns, and the forbidden times, extending from the first Sunday of Advent until Epiphany, inclusively, and from the first Sunday of Lent until the first Sunday after Easter, inclusively; 2d. *A Promise of Marriage* made to another person; 3d. *The Simple Vow of Chastity*, or the vow never to marry.

But the author of a law can also dispense with it. Consequently, wise and necessary though these impediments are, if cases arise where there are good motives to obtain dispensation thereof, as often happens, one only needs to ask for dispensation; the Church never refuses to grant it. But one must be careful to give a true statement of the case, otherwise the dispensation obtained might be null and void in its effect.

IV. The sacrament of matrimony, which sanctifies the legitimate union of man and woman, is a great sacrament, says the apostle St. Paul: *This is a great sacrament* (Ephes. v. 32). It is great, because it symbolizes the intimate and ineffable union of Jesus Christ with His Church: *But I speak in Christ and in the Church* (Ephes. v. 32). But it is great, also, because it confers upon the married couple the graces they need to fulfill the obligations of their state. Let us say a few words about these obligations. They may be reduced to four principal ones, which are, to live in union and charity, to bear with one another's faults, conjugal fidelity, and, finally, to give a good education to the children.

1st. Married persons ought to live in *union and charity*. They are obliged to live together, and can be bodily separated only for grave reasons. A wife who should leave her husband, or a husband who should abandon his wife, without a serious motive, would be a subject of scandal, and they would render themselves very guilty before God.

Living under the same roof, united by the most intimate and indissoluble of ties, the married couple ought to love each other with a real and constant love, with a holy love, of which God is the principal object. Consequently, they ought to assist and encourage one another to fulfill their duties of religion, charitably admonish one another of their faults, and correct their faults, for, as St. Paul says:

*The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the believing husband* (I. Cor. VII. 14). Let the husband love his wife as his own flesh, and as Jesus Christ has loved His Church, and, consequently, with a spiritual, but tender and generous, love; let the wife love her husband as the Church loves Jesus Christ, that is, with a respectful and submissive love. The wife must be subject to her husband in all that regards marriage, or the government of the house, provided that there is in both nothing contrary to the law of God. Christian wives, you owe obedience to your husbands, but only in what the sanctity of marriage or the law of God permits you.

2d. *To Bear with One Another's Faults.* — We all have faults, and he that should believe himself free therefrom would show himself senseless. Therefore, if we desire that others should bear ours, we must charitably bear the faults of others: *Bear ye one another's burdens* (Gal. VI. 2). And it is especially in married life that this forbearance is necessary. Since the married couple are almost continually together, how could husbands and wives live in union and peace without patience and resignation? "But," says one, "my wife is so quarrelsome, she is such an enemy of all work, she is so capricious!" But you, my dear man, are you not given to fits of passion, to intemperance? Have you been providing everything necessary for the household? Your wife has faults — yes, undoubtedly; but you are not free from them either. Learn to be patient and to bear one another's faults. If you do this cheerfully and out of love for God, you can acquire many merits. And whilst quarreling and fits of passion would make a hell of your household, on the contrary, if you are kind, patient, and charitable, you will live in happiness, and will draw upon you and upon your children the blessings of heaven.

3d. *Conjugal Fidelity.* — This is a solemn engagement which the married couple have contracted before the altar of God. To fail in conjugal fidelity would be a crime of which the thought alone makes us shudder. And who can form an idea of all the quarrels, of all the divisions, of all the calamities which follow in its train! Christian husbands and wives, watch over your conduct, so that you may not give room even to the least suspicion.

4th. *To Give a Good and Holy Education to Their Children.* — I shall not insist much on this point, because I have explained it sufficiently under the head of the Fourth Commandment. Suffice to recall

to your mind that you should instruct your children in all the truths of our holy religion, as well as in all its duties and practices. You should be careful that they fulfill faithfully all their religious duties, such as prayer, confession, attendance at divine service; you should give them good example, and never scandalize them; and you should correct their faults and keep them away from bad company.

V. Is it thus, Christian husbands and wives, that you have fulfilled your obligations? Have union and charity reigned in your household? Have you borne the faults of one another? How have you acquitted yourselves of the duties towards your children? Perhaps you will be painfully astonished at your negligence. Consider the examples of the saints. Consider the pure and edifying life of Zacharias and Elizabeth, of whom the Gospel speaks. They were both *just in the eyes of God.* They loved one another with a pure and innocent love, and the most perfect unity reigned between them. The fear of God with which they were penetrated rendered them strict observants of the law: *Walking in all the commandments* (Luke 1. 6). What holy enjoyments, and what happiness would be yours, my brethren, if you would imitate such models! What a subject of edification for you, Christian husband, in the conduct of the holy man Job who, hearing his wife complaining against God, contents himself with reproaching her in a charitable manner, and representing to her that we must submit ourselves to divine Providence, as well in evils as in the good. And what a model for you, Christian wives, is the conduct of St. Monica who, by her kindness and patience, by her good example and by prayer, succeeded in bringing back to God her husband and son. In following these beautiful examples, you will draw down upon yourselves the blessing of God, you will sanctify yourselves mutually, and you will merit to remain forever united in the bosom of a happy eternity, which I wish to you all. Amen.

## XXV. INSTRUCTION

### On Matrimony (*Concluded*)

After having spoken to you of the institution of the sacrament of matrimony, of the nature of this sacrament, of the laws which regulate it, of the effects which it produces, and of the obligations it imposes, I am going to instruct you to-day on the dispositions necessary to receive it. When we see so many unhappy marriages, so many husbands and wives in disunion, in misery, and on the way to damnation, we ask ourselves what is the reason? Ah! undoubtedly, the cause lies in the little care people take to prepare themselves for this holy state. This instruction is addressed to both married and unmarried persons. The unmarried may learn how they ought to dispose themselves in order to contract a Christian union; and the married, in considering what they ought to have done and what they have not done, will take occasion from this to repair whatever may have been defective in the manner in which they have received this sacrament.

What are the dispositions one must bring to the sacrament of matrimony? They are three in number: vocation to marriage, a pure and upright intention, and the state of grace.

I. *Vocation to the Married State.*— We are not all called to the same kind of life; some are destined for marriage and others for celibacy; some to live in the world and others in the cloister. There are different manners of life, but all lead to heaven. Each one should follow that course which God has marked out for him, and adopt the state to which he is destined, otherwise he would expose himself to be unfortunate, not only in this world, through the uneasiness and suffering which he would undergo in a vocation which was not his own, but, also, in the next world, on account of the more numerous dangers to which he would find himself exposed, and the particular helps of grace which would be wanting to him.

It is, therefore, supremely important that each one should know his vocation. But how can we know our vocation? In the first place, we must consult God, because it is He and He alone who gives us our vocation, just as a master determines the occupation of each of his servants, or as a father distributes work to each of his children. It is necessary, therefore, to pray, and to pray fervently; then to examine what is our attraction, that is, to what state we feel ourselves most

inclined, and what our physical and moral qualities are; for God never calls a person to a state the duties of which he cannot fulfill.

After a young man has assured himself that he is called to the marriage state, all is not over; he must also seek to know who the person is whom God has destined for him; for, from the moment God calls you to the married state, He has chosen for you your companion; and it is with this one and with no other that you must unite yourself. If in this you do the will of God, your marriage will be well matched, pure, and happy, and you will save yourself more easily. If, on the contrary, you follow mere passion and inclination, you are preparing trials and dangers for the future. Hence, if, after having consulted God, you decide to marry, pray to the Lord to make known to you the one who is to be your companion, as Eliezer did, when he sought a wife for his master: *Lord, enlighten me and show me Thyself her whom Thou hast destined for Isaac, Thy servant.* You should also consult your confessor, in order that he may give you the proper advice, and caution you against the temptations and dangers to which you might be exposed. Finally, you should consult your parents, who are for you the representatives of God; and in such an important affair you should, as a rule, act only with their advice. Nature, religion, and even human laws, impose this as a duty upon you, but it is especially your own interest which requires this. For your parents love you, and desire your happiness, and on account of their experience and the calmness of their reasoning, they see better than you do what is good for you, since you are inclined to be led in such matters by infatuation and passion, rather than by reason.

This is what you must do, my brethren, to know the state to which you are called. But how many young persons there are who, instead of consulting religion and experience, listen only to the voice of their passions and their momentary tastes! How many do we not see who, far from consulting, do not even wish to be advised, and who refuse to listen to observations, or even remonstrances, of persons to whom they owe obedience and respect. "I shall marry him or her in spite of you," we hear young persons say to their parents who try to dissuade them from an improper marriage, and the parents, in order to avoid the gravest inconvenience, end by giving their consent. And what often results? Since they are marriages which God does not bless, they are most often unhappy marriages, and bring into the family nothing but divisions, hatreds, discords, and sometimes infidelity

and misery. Of course, parents ought to be prudent and reasonable, and never force the will of their children, or be opposed to their legitimate inclinations; but children, on their part, ought to show submission and regard to the wishes of their parents, and listen to their good advices as coming from God Himself.

And now, parents and children, do you wish to know, in a few words, the qualities which should guide you in your choice? They are virtue and the similarity of morals.

Young man, is your intended one gentle and modest? Is she submissive to her parents; has she a taste for work, for prayer, for the frequentation of the sacraments? If so, then marry her without fear; she has qualities which will insure your happiness. But, on the contrary, if she is vain and arrogant, and negligent in her religious duties, beware of marrying her; you would bring a viper into your family circle.

Young woman, is your intended industrious and sober? Does he go regularly to the sacraments? If so marry him, and be without fear. But, on the contrary, is he dissipated and idle, does he neglect the sacraments, does he frequent bad company, does he pass a great part of his time in the saloons? Ah! then, be on your guard. If you should marry him, you would be the most unhappy of wives. No, do not marry him, even if he promises to correct himself, for such promises are always made but seldom kept.

II. The second disposition which one must bring to marriage is *a pure and holy intention.* What ends should one propose to himself in entering the married state? None but those which God Himself has proposed in instituting it.

The first end which you should have in view is to do the will of God who calls you to this state.

The second is to have children, not only that they may be heirs of your name and the support in your old age, but, also, to render them worthy to possess and glorify God in heaven.

The third is to withdraw yourselves from the occasions of sin, and from the dangers of the flesh and the devil.

Finally, the fourth is to support each other in the troubles of life, to assist each other in your work; in one word, to be a mutual help in the needs of body and soul.

Such are the objects of marriage. The archangel Raphael thus instructed the young Tobias: *Thou shalt take the virgin with the fear*

*of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust* (Tob. VI. 22).

Therefore, it is not through carnal or interested motives that one must enter the marriage state. The first seven husbands whom Sara had married successively had come with brutal and sensual views, and the devil killed them on the very first night of their nuptials. God always condemns and curses similar alliances. As regards the temporal goods or exterior accomplishments of the person you have in view, it must never be the principal motive that determines you; you would find bitter deceptions. Undoubtedly, religion does not condemn the seeking of temporal advantages; but what it blames, what it severely disapproves, is that in such an important affair as marriage, a person should permit himself to be guided and directed by such unworthy motives. And, nevertheless, how many young men and women there are who look on the money side of marriage! "How much is she worth?" "Oh, I can have another much richer than she is." This is mere bargaining. Marriage seems to have become for many a regular traffic, an affair of commerce. But is it thus that one should treat such a grave and delicate affair, an affair which will influence a whole life? Undoubtedly, one may assure himself of the financial part of the affair; this may often be necessary and nobody can find fault with it. But what is very blamable is the covetousness, and stupidity of those who see in a proposal of marriage only an affair of money. Allow me to quote to you, in spite of the holiness of the place, a very popular proverb, and one full of sense: "A wife without money is better than money without a wife." An industrious, orderly, and economical wife, filled with the fear of God, will easily cause a house to prosper, if she is seconded by her husband; whilst the best families are sometimes ruined by the carelessness, idleness, extravagance, and levity of women.

Bring to marriage pure and holy intentions. Follow the example of young Tobias, who prayed: "Lord, Thou seest the intentions of my heart. When I take this maiden to be my wife, it is only to sanctify myself with her, and to raise in Thy fear the children which Thou mayest give to us, in order that they may bless Thy holy name for all eternity."

III. The third and last disposition for marriage is *the state of grace*. Matrimony is a sacrament, and a sacrament of the living. One would, therefore, commit a sacrilege if he were to receive it in the state of

mortal sin. And not only would he commit a sacrilege, but he would also deprive himself of the special graces that are attached to this sacrament, at least as long as he should remain in mortal sin. This is why the Church prescribes that those about to be married should go to confession before receiving the sacrament of matrimony.

But what should this confession be? Is it sufficient, for instance, to simply present oneself to the priest, as some persons seem to understand this precept? Not at all. The confession ought to be made with all the sentiments of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment. What are we to think of those who, in spite of all the entreaties of the priest, limit themselves to appearing once or twice in the confessional, and then going off, without absolution, and receiving the sacrament of matrimony? They add a new mortal sin to all those which they have already committed, and, instead of drawing down the blessings of heaven on the state which they embrace, they incur the anger of God. How can they expect to be happy after such a bad beginning?

In order to dispose oneself well for marriage, you must make a sincere and sacramental confession, and a confession which puts you again in the state of grace with God whom you have offended. But this confession ought not to be put off to the last day. It should be made a few weeks beforehand, especially when one finds himself addicted to bad habits, in order that a confessor may have time to instruct the penitent, and subject him to the necessary trials. It is good to make a general confession, if the confessor judges it proper. To wait till the last moment is to expose oneself to do nothing good and solid. And, nevertheless, how many are careless in this regard!

If confession is necessary to dispose you for marriage, a change of life, the correction of bad habits, the flight of the occasions are much more necessary. It is a deplorable thing to see those long visits, those secret meetings, which ordinarily precede the nuptial blessing. Undoubtedly, some meetings and some interviews are necessary, but must these relations last for years? Must they take place in hidden and suspicious places, or in excursions, picnics, . . . to the great scandal of persons who are witnesses thereof? Must this intercourse be accompanied with indecent familiarities, with criminal liberties? Do you forget that you are in the presence of God who sees you and who will one day judge you? Is this a proper preparation for the holy state you intend to embrace? Remember that you are

Christians; be careful that the interviews with the person you have in view take place only in the presence of your parents, of your masters, or of some person worthy of respect. See that these interviews take place as seldom as possible, and be careful that you always hold them according to the rules of modesty and decency.

Such are, my brethren, the dispositions one must bring to marriage: a vocation, a pure and holy intention, and the state of grace.

Married persons, were these your dispositions? Does your conscience reproach you with anything in this regard? Ah! if, unfortunately, you have entered the marriage state with evil intentions, with a conscience soiled with mortal sin, and if you have not yet done penance, do not remain any longer in this deplorable state, but hasten to throw yourselves at the feet of some charitable and enlightened confessor who will tell you what you have to do in order to obtain your reconciliation with God, and to revive in you the grace of the sacrament which you have already received.

As to you, young Christians, if you believe yourselves called to the married state, reflect well before undertaking anything; pray long and seriously before entering that holy state, and enter it only with good and holy views. Finally, bring that purity of heart, and that nuptial garment, the state of grace, which God requires of you. Thus, you shall merit that Jesus will assist at your nuptials, as He formerly assisted at those of Cana; that the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob will spread over you His abundant blessings, during your short pilgrimage upon earth, and that He will call you to assist at *the nuptials of the Lamb*, for all eternity. Amen.

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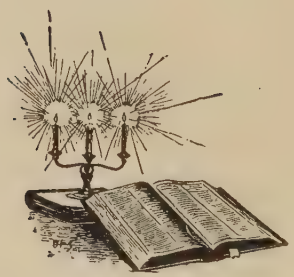

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